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The Origins of Christian Identity in the Letters of Paul

BY
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ABSTRACT

A common theme in examining Christian identity focuses on the emergence of that identity, on locating the point in time within the history of the Christian church that one can first observe a clearly identifiable community which can be called 'Christian.' There is evidence that a clear sense of a Christian identity existed by the second century CE. This is expressed in several authors from the second century CE, who employ 'ethnic' terminology to refer to the Christians as a 'new' or 'third' race. What allowed these authors to identify the Christians as a distinct 'race' so soon after the emergence of the group? This study explores the origins of this 'race' of Christians. Examination of the earliest existent Christian texts, the undisputed letters of the apostle Paul, demonstrates a group which exists partially within the Jewish identity group, and yet simultaneously displays features of a unique group identity.

Two methods of investigation are employed to explore the origins of a Christian 'race.' First, from those authors who describe the Christians as a 'race,' a 'vocabulary of identity' is identified, and instances of this vocabulary are examined in the undisputed Pauline corpus to demonstrate the continued Jewish identity of Paul and many of his congregants. Second, a series of group identity features which are unique to the Jewish identity group are drawn from the work of John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, James D.G. Dunn, and E.P. Sanders. An examination of these features in the undisputed Pauline corpus shows the beginnings of a distancing between the nascent Christian movement and its Jewish parent body.

Continuing the investigation, the study explores the Pauline epistles for evidence of uniquely Christian group identity features. A series of these identifiers are examined, demonstrating the methods by which the earliest Christ-followers were identified as Christ-followers. These Christ-following identifiers served as the basis for the eventual 'ethnic' distinction of the Christian movement. The thesis concludes that the Pauline epistles reveal the origins of the later Christian 'race', and that during the first century Paul and his congregations simultaneously existed within the Jewish identity group, and alongside this group as members of an identifiable Christ-following identity group.

SIGNED DECLARATION

I, Stephen D. Louy, hereby declare that I have written this thesis and that the work it contains is entirely my own. I furthermore declare that this thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed_____

Date_____

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	v
Abbreviations	vii
Introduction	1
The Study of Identity – 5	
Social Identity Theory – 17	
Studies of Greek Identity – 19	
Studies of Jewish Identity – 25	
Studies of Christian Identity – 40	
The Form of the Examination – 59	
Chapter 2	61
The Nature of Sectarianism – 63	
The Question of Sources – 75	
The New Testament – 76	
The Rabbinic Literature – 77	
Josephus – 78	
The Pharisees – 81	
The Sadducees – 88	
The Essenes and the Qumran Community – 93	
Other Sects in the First Century – 104	
Summary – 108	
Chapter 3	109
Pauline Christianity and the Vocabulary of Identity – 112	
Pauline Christianity and Jewish Identity – 129	
Excursus: Voluntary Associations – 148	
Pauline Christianity and ‘Something Else’ – 155	
Chapter 4	157
A Proper Name – 159	
Ἐκκλησία – 160	
Other Identifying Terms – 173	
Fictive Kinship and Community – 175	
<i>Ekklesial</i> Memories – 188	
<i>Ekklesial</i> Culture – 204	
Baptism – 205	
Eucharist – 211	
The Holy Kiss – 215	
Persecution – 220	
<i>Ekklesial</i> Homeland – 235	
<i>Ekklesial</i> Solidarity – 240	
Summary – 242	
Conclusion	245
Bibliography	251

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
ASR	American Sociological Review
BTB	Biblical Theology Bulletin
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
EDNT	Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JECS	Journal of Early Christian Studies
JEH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
NTS	New Testament Studies
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

INTRODUCTION

The question of Christian identity is one which has been much addressed in modern scholarship. A common theme in examining Christian identity focuses on the emergence of that identity, on locating the point in time within the history of the Christian church that one can first observe a clearly identifiable community which can be called 'Christian.' There are many examples of sources from antiquity which refer to the Christ-following communities as an identifiably distinct group, that is to say, as a group that can be clearly identified as *not* being some other group.¹ Consider the question posed by the anonymous *Epistle to Diognetus*, τί δῆποτε καινὸν τοῦτο γένος (*Diog.* 1.1). Aristides writes: ὅτι τρία γένη εἰσὶν ἀνθρώπων ἐν τῷδε τῷ κόσμῳ· ὧν εἰσὶν οἱ τῶν παρ' ὑμῖν λεγομένων θεῶν προσκυνηταί, καὶ Ἰουδαῖοι, καὶ Χριστιανοί (*Apology* 2.2), while Tertullian offers a similar observation, that *tertium genus dicimur* (*Ad Nationes* 8.1).² From the New Testament, the author of 1 Peter writes to the Christian recipients of the letter that ὑμεῖς δὲ γένος ἐκλεκτόν, ...ἔθνος ἅγιον, λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν. However, it must be noted that each of these sources dates from the second century CE, and each reflects a second century world view. Clearly, there already existed for these authors a sense of the Christian community's distinction and people-hood, as

1. 'The foundational concept is that of difference as constituting identity, since something only *is* to the extent that it is distinguished from something else': Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 19. Cf. Regina Börschel, *Die Konstruktion einer Christlichen Identität: Paulus und die Gemeinde von Thessalonich in Ihrer Hellenistisch-Römischen Umwelt* (Berlin: Philo, 2001), 12.

2. '...we are called a third race.' The Latin is taken from André Schneider, *Le Premier Livre Ad Nationes de Tertullien: Introduction, Texte, Traduction et Commentaire* (Rome: Institut Suisse de Rome, 1968), 76.

represented by the use of ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ terminology, γένος in the Greek and *genus* in the Latin. In the case of *Diognetus* and Tertullian, both authors are responding to questions and criticisms which originate from contemporary pagan opponents, demonstrating that outsiders also identified the Christian community as a distinct, possibly ‘ethnic,’ entity at this time. We find for this direct evidence in the witness of two Roman authors, Tacitus and Suetonius.

In his *Annals*, Tacitus writes: *Ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos et quesitissimis poenis adfecit, quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat* (15.44).³ Referring to the same incident, Suetonius writes: [Nero] *afflicti suppliciis Christiani, genus hominum superstitionis novae ac maleficae* (Nero 16).⁴ Though the Tacitus passage lacks the addition of so-called ‘ethnic’ language, it does suggest that, under Nero, the Christians were identifiable as a group, while Suetonius employs the same ‘ethnic’ language placed in the mouths of non-Christians by Tertullian and the author of *Diognetus*. However, despite this difference, both Tacitus and Suetonius suggest that the Christians at the time of Nero were identifiable, at least enough to affix blame for the fire of 64 CE to them. However, as with the Christian sources cited above, both Tacitus and Suetonius are writing in the second century, and it may be argued that their statements regarding the identification of a group called ‘Christians’ as being responsible for the blaze may be nothing more than a retrojection of second century understandings to events of the first century. This is supported by their use of the term ‘Christian’ itself; though increasingly common in the second century, the term is rare in

3. ‘Thus, to avoid the rumour, Nero affixed the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on those hated for their crimes, called Christians by the people.’ The Latin is taken from the 1937 LCL edition, translated by John Jackson. The translation is my own.

4. ‘[Nero] afflicted punishments on the Christians, a race of men with a new and mischievous superstition.’ The Latin is taken from the 1914 LCL edition, translated by J.C. Rolfe. The translation is my own.

first century texts. In the 27 books of the New Testament, ‘Christian,’ from the Greek Χριστιανός, appears only three times, at Acts 11.26 and 26.28, and at 1 Peter 4.16. The term can also be observed in the writings of Josephus, where he refers to the τῶν Χριστιανῶν...τὸ φῶλον, ‘the tribe of the Christians’ (*Ant.* 18.64), though each of these texts originates after the time described by Tacitus and Suetonius. The second century use of ‘Christian’ to describe the Christ-followers of 64 CE may be said, then, to be anachronistic. However, the inaccuracy of the term ‘Christian’ aside, it is telling that both Tacitus and Suetonius understood those blamed for the fire to be an identifiable group of some kind. This indicates that those who were branded by Nero as arsonists were identifiable as what we, today, would call Christians; in the words of Peter Lampe, ‘Im Jahr 64 n.Chr. unterscheiden sogar die Behörden zwischen Juden und Christen.’⁵

This observation is key to the following examination, in that it provides a starting point to explore Christian identity in the first century. As seen, there existed a clear sense of a Christian identity by the second century CE, repeatedly expressed through ethnic terminology, referred to repeatedly as a ‘new’ or ‘third’ group. This language was applied to Christians in the middle of the first century, as well. However, all of the sources examined which speak of the Christians in these terms date from the late first or second century CE, well after the Neronian persecutions in which a group called ‘Christians’ are presented as villains. The question facing us, then, is not one of when this sense of the Christians as a ‘new’ or ‘third’ identity group began to emerge, but what about the community allowed others to identify them in such a way. Given the evidence of an identifiable Christian community during the reign of Nero we must turn to texts which pre-date the fire of Rome to search for evidence of the origins of such an

5. Peter Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten: Untersuchungen zur Socialgeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), 9.

identifiable Christian community. There are a handful of documents from this time period which speak at great length regarding the Christ-followers of the mid-first century: the letters of the apostle Paul. My aim in this work is to contribute to the study of the origins of Christian identity,⁶ bearing in mind the question of how the authorities in 64 CE might have been able to so clearly and, seemingly, easily identify the Christians as a unique group. To this end, I will focus my examination on those boundary markers that contribute to the formation and maintenance of identity groups, the sign posts of identity. This is a subject area often overlooked by scholars in their discussions of Christian identity in the first century, but one which lies at the heart of the later emergence of the view of Christianity as a ‘third’ or ‘new’ identity group. Our question, then, is what lead to this eventual ethnic identification of the Christians?

Our examination will explore the seven letters of the undisputed Pauline corpus in order to uncover the origins of the ‘new’ identity group of Christians, to shine light on those elements of the nascent Christ-following communities which contributed to the identifiability of these communities within a rather short period of time from their creation.

As noted, the language we have seen applied to the Christ-followers of the first and second century has a decidedly ‘ethnic’ flavour to it, that is, ancient authors used words to identify the Christ-followers which we, today, understand as being ethnic in

6. It must be noted, here at the outset of this study, that Paul cannot be thought of as representing, or representative of, the entire Christ-following movement of the first century CE. There existed at least two ‘branches’ of Christ-followers, those of the Pauline communities, and those of the Petrine communities. Paul himself alludes to this division at Gal. 2:7-8, in which he notes that he has been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised. Elsewhere in Galatians, however, Paul makes note of tensions which existed between himself and Peter, and it is clear that there either was from the beginning or came to be important differences between the two. However, no writings of Peter’s, if any ever existed, survive today. Paul’s epistles remain the earliest Christian texts, and these have been vastly influential in the development of Christianity since the first century CE. With this in mind, I turn to the Pauline epistles to explore the origins Christian identity in the first century.

nature. Any examination of a Christian group identity in the first century must necessarily entail an examination of this so-called ethnic language, as well. The terms in question, γένος, ἔθνος, λαός and φῶλον, are generally translated as ‘race,’ ‘nation,’ ‘people,’ and ‘tribe,’ respectively, and each contributes to what we, today, would consider to be ethnic or ‘racial’ identity. That this vocabulary was used so frequently in second century texts to describe the Christians suggests that the key to locating the origins of the eventual ethnic distinction of the Christians may be linked to ancient conceptions of ethnicity, or ethnic group identity. Thus, an appropriate place to begin our examination of Christian group identification seemingly lies in the study of ethnicity.

The Study of Identity

It may be argued that the study of ‘ethnicity’ in the ancient world is, itself, as anachronistic as was the Roman application of the term ‘Christian’ to individuals in the first century. In the introduction to their volume *Ethnicity*, John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith offer a brief discussion on the origins of the term ‘ethnicity,’⁷ noting that the word did not emerge into scholarship until the 1950s,⁸ before defining and describing ethnic identity. They write:

“‘Ethnic identity’ and ‘ethnic origin’ refer to the individual level of identification with a culturally defined collectivity, the sense on the part of the individual that she or he belongs to a particular cultural community. ‘Ethnic origin’ likewise refers to a sense of ancestry and nativity on the part of the individual through his or her parents and grandparents....”⁹

7. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4.

8. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 40, however, notes the first appearance of ‘ethnicity’ in English in 1941, in a study by W. Lloyd Warner, though he does not provide a full reference for this work.

9. Hutchinson and Smith, *Ethnicity*, 5.

They then go on to point out that '[w]e find records of 'tribes' and ethnic groups in the middle east in the third millennium BC, with the advent of the ancient Egyptians, Sumerians, and Elamites,' and that '[c]ertain ethnic groups stand out in the ancient world, notably the ancient Greeks and Jews....'¹⁰ It is, then, appropriate to study ancient identity groups in terms of modern scholarship. The definition of 'ethnicity' offered by Hutchinson and Smith seems fairly straightforward, but will not serve as we move forward in our examination. The sticking point in this definition of group identification is the sense of a biological relationship between members of the group, of shared biological features and traits which serve to help identify a given population as a unique group. Gregory Smoak has suggested a definition of 'ethnicity' that is 'a presumed identity, and unlike kinship, it is not based on blood ties or concrete social interaction.'¹¹ While this represents a nuanced understanding of the term, it does not represent common, modern conceptions of 'ethnicity.' This terminology is, at best, problematic for a study such as this; it is widely accepted in scholarship that the earliest Christians, Paul in particular, were unquestionably members of the Jewish ethnic group, that is, they were both culturally and biologically Jews. A claim that Paul or the churches he founded and to which he wrote had, in the first century, distinguished themselves 'ethnically' from the Jewish parent body implies a complete separation of the two communities, in which individuals either are or are not one thing or another. Such an exertion is not the goal of this study. Further, in the modern world it has become increasingly difficult to separate concepts of 'ethnicity,' shared cultural features, from concepts of 'race,' that is, biological characteristics and traits shared by a community. As Philip Esler notes, 'the

10. Hutchinson and Smith, *Ethnicity*, 10–11.

11. Gregory E. Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity: Prophetic Religion and American Indian Ethnogenesis in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 5.

widespread tendency to discern ‘race’ and racial issues in the ancient world has been quite destructive to our understanding of how ancient Judeans, Greeks, and Romans interacted among themselves....’¹² This aspect of biological commonality, of ‘race,’ which is present in Hutchinson and Smith’s definition is largely absent in the Christ-following communities of the first century, on which our examination focuses. However, it remains that the Christ-followers were identifiable as a group. How, then, can we propose to use studies of ethnic identities in searching for a Christian identity?

The study of ethnic groups has been going on for millennia, as noted by Hutchinson and Smith. ‘Ethnicity’ is itself derived from the Greek ἔθνος, ‘nation.’¹³ Concepts of ‘people,’ ‘nation,’ ‘race/kinship group,’ and ‘tribe,’ which represent the four terms applied to the first century Christ-followers, carry much more nuance in the ancient world than merely shared biological characteristics. Thus, in order to avoid the connotation of either shared biological commonalities or of a completely separate group, the terminology of ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ studies, including terms such as ‘ethnic,’ ‘ethnicity,’ ‘race,’ ‘people,’ etc., will be avoided whenever possible. In place of these, we will prefer simply ‘group identity’ or ‘identifiable group’ in the singular and plural, which should be understood to mean any group, whether completely independent of or related to other groups, which may be, simply, identifiable: that is, both insiders and outsiders would be able to identify an individual or group of individuals as belonging to a particular group. This terminology neither implies nor requires an understanding of complete separation between the group in question and any other group, nor does it rely on or necessarily imply the presence of shared biological heritage or traits, but instead allows for multiple levels of self-identification, and a discussion of intragroup

12. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 51.

13. Cf. Hutchinson and Smith, *Ethnicity*, 4 and Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 40.

boundaries and dynamics; this will be discussed further below. Before proceeding further, it must be noted that much of the following discussion will employ those very terms which I would prefer to avoid. However, this cannot be helped; the vast majority of modern studies of group identity operate in terms of ‘ethnic identity.’ As we shall see, this does not necessarily imply a completely separate or distinct relationship between groups, but can allow for an understanding of layered identities. The modern study of ‘ethnicity’ is merely a combination and continuation of ancient treatments of phenomena such as γένος, ἔθνος, λαός and φύλον. Where possible, I will hold to my preference of ‘group identity’; however, in discussing works of note in this field, some concession to the preferred scholarly vocabulary must be granted.

Though it is not the earliest study of ethnicity in the modern world, Fredrik Barth’s 1969 publication *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* is of critical importance to any work in this field, my own study included. Drawing on anthropological literature, Barth identifies four features by which groups set themselves apart or are set apart by others. In Barth’s view, the group:

- 1) ‘is largely biologically self-perpetuating;
- 2) ‘shares fundamental cultural values...;
- 3) ‘makes up a field of communication and interaction’, and;
- 4) ‘has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.’¹⁴

In other words, Barth views group boundaries as being composed of a shared lineage, a shared culture, a shared language, and a sense of solidarity against and distinction from outsiders. It is here that Barth parts ways with his anthropological forebears, for whom ‘the sharing of a common culture is generally given central

14. Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), 10–11.

importance.’ Barth instead elects to regard ‘this very important feature as an implication or result, rather than a primary and definitional characteristic of ethnic group organisation.’¹⁵ This is of key significance to our examination of a Christ-following group identity in the first century; as Philip Esler notes, for Barth ‘cultural features did not constitute but did *signal* ethnic identity and boundaries.’¹⁶ In a later work, Esler summarises Barth’s argument as follows:

‘Barth argued that ethnic groups did not depend on the possession of a set of cultural features...but that their sense of themselves as a group interacting with other groups came first and that cultural features (changing over time) were deployed to express that sense of boundary.’¹⁷

In other words, those items which Barth understood as shared cultural values are merely the signposts around a given identity group, markers to indicate that, within the boundaries created by those shared cultural markers, there exists an identifiable group.

In place of shared cultural values, Barth places the most emphasis on the fourth feature of his list, making special note of the fact that ‘ethnic groups are...a form of social organisation,’ and thus that ‘[t]he critical feature then becomes...the characteristic of self-ascription and ascription by others.’¹⁸ This ‘self-ascription and ascription by others’ is the most important identifying feature of an identity group, that is, the group identifies itself and/or is identified by others as being that group. Further, in Barth’s opinion, only those distinguishing features which ‘the actors themselves regard as

15. Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 12.

16. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 42.

17. Philip F. Esler, “Judean Ethnic Identity in Josephus,” in *A Wandering Galilean: Essays in Honor of Seán Freyne*, ed. Zuleika Rodgers, Margaret Daly-Denton, and Anne Fitzpatrick McKinley (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 75.

18. Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 13.

significant' are significant;¹⁹ thus, what an outsider considers to be an identifying feature of a given group is of secondary importance to what an insider considers to be an identifying feature.²⁰

As observed above, Barth presents a list of features which serve to identify a given group as that group. Such a list is valuable to this study, in that it provides a mechanism by which to examine group identification in the ancient world. However, though influential to the field, the list provided by Barth is somewhat rudimentary in its ability to assist us in observing an identifiable Christ-following group identity. After all, initially, the Christ-followers grew in numbers more through proselyzation than biological means, and being drawn from a variety of different backgrounds, the Christ-followers made up 'a field of communication and interaction' not only amongst themselves, but also with Jews, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians and many others outside the community. But, Barth does offer a key to observing group identity in the ancient world, through the boundary marking signposts of shared cultural values which a given group would display; by identifying the sign posts which point to identity groups, we can observe the existence of these groups.

To this end, we turn to the many works of Anthony D. Smith, one of the most prominent scholars in the field of identity studies. Several of Smith's works are of great relevance to this study, and trace the development of his thought with regard to how

19. Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 14. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 7 and 53, makes a similar point: 'a nation is a nation if its members want it to be one', and that 'two men are of the same nation if and only if they recognise each other as belonging to the same nation.' See also John A. Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 7–8: 'ethnic boundary mechanisms exist in the minds of their subjects.'

20. Though he removes cultural differences from the primary position it had previously held in ethnic identification studies, Barth does acknowledge that 'ethnic categories take cultural difference into account,' though he warns that 'we can assume no simple one-to-one relationship between ethnic units and cultural similarities and differences.' Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 14.

identity groups may be identified. Smith, like Barth, offers a list of distinguishing features, of cultural signposts, by which an identity group may be identified, in *The Ethnic Revival*. He determines that

‘[a]n ethnic group is distinguished by four features: the sense of unique group origins, the knowledge of a unique group history and belief in its destiny, one or more dimensions of collective cultural individuality, and finally a sense of unique cultural solidarity.’²¹

We find in this several similarities to Barth’s statement above: both suggest an element of ingroup solidarity, Smith in those terms and Barth as a sense of unique identification on the part of ingroup members; and both point to elements of shared culture which mark out the group in question to others. There is one particular point of difference between the two which reflects part of the ‘ethnicity/race’ distinction discussed above. Barth suggests a biological aspect to an identity group, specifically that the group in question is biologically self-perpetuating, while Smith avoids an aspect of biological commonality. Rather, he points to ‘unique group origins’ with which members of the group can identify. While this in many instances does entail a biological aspect (as will be observed below), it does not necessarily require a biological aspect. Instead, this merely calls for the identification of a common point of origin in history, for example, the founding of a city, from which point the residents of that city trace their citizenship, and whose claim to citizenship then lacks a biological element.

But this is not Smith’s final word on the sign post features by which groups may be identified. He returns to this topic in many of his subsequent works. *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*, published in 1986, features a list similar to that found in *The Ethnic Revival*. Here, Smith writes that: ‘*ethnie* (ethnic communities) may now be defined as named human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories, and cultures, having an

21. Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 66.

association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity.²² Each of Smith's previously identified features (shared origin and/or lineage, common culture, distinct and common history, and sense of solidarity) are found here, but Smith has included two additional features on this revised list: a name for the group in question and an association with a specific territory. This expanded list continued to play an important role in Smith's work. A decade after *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, his and John Hutchinson's edited volume *Ethnicity* offered a further-expanded list of group identifiers. Nearly all of the features laid out by Smith in his earlier works may be found in this later work, in which they suggest that an identity group displays all or some of the following:

'1) a common *proper name*, to identify and express the 'essence' of the community; 2) a myth of *common ancestry*...that includes the idea of a common origin in time and place and...gives...a sense of fictive kinship; 3) shared *historical memories*, or...shared memories of a common past...including heroes, events, and their commemoration; 4) one or more *elements of a common culture*, which need not be specified but normally include religion, customs, or language; 5) a *link* with a *homeland*, not necessarily its physical occupation...only its symbolic attachment...as with Diaspora peoples; 6) a *sense of solidarity* on the part of at least some sections of the...population.'²³

Though Hutchinson and Smith's list is not the last word on the identifying features of group identity, it is one of the most comprehensive; for this reason, numerous scholars have employed this list of group identity criteria in their own work.²⁴ Of

22. Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1986), 32.

23. Hutchinson and Smith, *Ethnicity*, 6–7.

24. See, e.g., Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*; Jonathan M. Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Smoak, *Ghost Dances*; and Dennis C. Duling, "'Whatever Gain I Had.': Ethnicity and Paul's Self-Identification in Philippians 3:5–6," *Hervormde Theologische Studies* 64, no. 2 (2008): 799–818.

particular import in this list is, as in Smith's earlier writings on this topic, the lack of a biological element to the group identity. For the remainder of this examination, I will adopt this list of group identity criteria as a model through which to examine ancient identity groups, particularly the nascent Christ-following group of the first century CE.

I would briefly like to draw the reader's attention to the second criteria in this expanded list, that of fictive kinship. Above, I took time carefully to divorce my own study from an understanding of 'ethnic identity,' that is, identity based in part on 'racial' features, on shared biological traits which are unique to or indicative of a given population, and which therefore serve to help identify that population. That an element of kinship should appear on the list of identifying features which we have elected to employ in our examination of Christian group identity seems, then, to be at stark odds with our stated desire to avoid modern 'ethnic' and 'racial' connotations. However, it must be carefully noted that the criteria on Hutchinson and Smith's list is not 'shared biological descent,' but rather 'a *myth* of common ancestry...and...a sense of *fictive* kinship.' *Fictive* kinship is exactly that: a sense of kinship, of familial relations of some kind, which are not necessarily based on actual biological or marital relations. Similarly, a *myth* of common origins is just that, a myth, a commonly held belief within a given identity group that may or may not have any basis in reality. Both of these aspects are fictional, as opposed to actual. Given this fictional aspect, it would be easy to assume that these criteria are of lesser importance than the others, but this is not the case; in studies of group identity, many of those authors surveyed above hold that a myth of common ancestry, that is, a sense of fictive kinship, is the most widespread and common

feature of group identity.²⁵ This will be explored in much greater detail in subsequent chapters of this work.

Other scholars have also offered lists of identifying features, of boundary markers, by which one may observe an identifiable group. However, few of these offer points not covered by the list offered by Hutchinson and Smith; as noted, many scholars reference this list in their own works.²⁶ One author who does offer an additional criterion for identity determination is Christopher Stanley. In line with sociologists A. Royce and Henri Tajfel,²⁷ Stanley defines “ethnicity” not as a fixed quality that inheres in some objectively identifiable population group, but rather as a fluid aspect of individual and group self-definition....’ In other words, the feature or features which most distinguish an ethnic group are not fixed, but fluid, and may change over time; they may even be ‘highlighted or ignored as circumstances warrant.’²⁸ In Stanley’s opinion, the most common distinguishing features are:

‘1) a belief in a *shared history*, often grounded in a story or myth of common origin; 2) a *common culture*, with special stress on features that distinguish the group from the broader society, including language and/or religion; and 3) some form of *physical difference* that sets group members apart from others (bodily appearance, hairstyle, dress, and so forth).’²⁹
[original emphases]

25. Cf. Max Weber, “Ethnic Groups,” in *Economy and Society Vol. 1*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 385–89; Hutchinson and Smith, *Ethnicity*, 35–40; Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 41 and Esler, “Judean Ethnic Identity,” 76.

26. See note 23.

27. A. Royce, *Ethnic Identity: Strategies of Diversity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); Henri Tajfel, *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

28. Christopher D. Stanley, “‘Neither Jew Nor Greek’: Ethnic Conflict in Graeco-Roman Society,” *JSNT* 64 (1996): 110.

29. Stanley, “‘Neither Jew Nor Greek’,” 111.

Many similarities can be seen between this list by Stanley and those put forth by Barth, Hutchinson and Smith; each list features 'a common culture' as one of the key distinguishing features (note that Stanley also suggests that religion need not be included under 'culture'), and both include a shared history in their list. Stanley, however, includes a 'physical difference,' one which presumably distinguishes by sight the group in question from other groups, and for this reason I have chosen to briefly address his suggested list of boundary markers. Stanley's inclusion of a 'physical difference' seems, in my reading, to fall under the category of 'elements of common culture.' For example, one could point to the distinct dress and appearance of Hasidic Jews in the modern world, both of which are elements of their unique culture. Stanley points specifically to circumcision as the physical mark that identified Jews in the ancient world. However, this, too, is a cultural feature, and as we will see, Jews in antiquity were neither identifiable on sight nor the only practitioners of circumcision. This will be explored below.

There is one further aspect of the study of ethnicity which does not appear in the list of identifying features provided by Barth or Hutchinson and Smith, but which is important for our study; this is the concept of multiple identities. This is relatively self-explanatory: multiple identities exist when an individual simultaneously exists within more than one identifiable group. The best example I have heard to illustrate this point derives from the modern conception of national citizenship. Consider a child born on American soil to British parents. This child would hold both British and American citizenship, and would be able to travel between the two groups, sometimes highlighting elements of British citizenship, sometimes elements of American citizenship, while never giving up one identity in favour of the other. In cases of group within group existence, as in the above scenario, 'one ethnic identity is usually prominent at any one

time, either because of the choice of those concerned or, more typically, because external social pressures and circumstances produce such a result.³⁰ More simply, ‘[s]ometimes the bearers of multiple identities highlight one to conform to the local context and sometimes to express their distinction from it.’³¹ The theory of multiple identities will serve us in our discussion of Paul and the emerging Christian identity group, demonstrating the ability to exist within one identity group while simultaneously working to build boundaries around a new layer of group identity.

I must offer one final note on these group identity boundary markers, this being that an identity group need not display each and every one of the criteria identified by Hutchinson and Smith at all times. Indeed, it is commonly accepted that the means by which a group defines itself change over time. In scholarship, this is referred to as the ‘fixed/fluid’ nature of ethnicity, nomenclature which is designed to highlight the mutable nature of boundary markers over time, and for those who possess multiple layers of identity.³² This observation will also be key to our examination of Paul’s self-identification, as we will see evidence of the fluidity of identity in various situations in the letters of Paul.

30. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 49. Cf. Joseph Geiger, “The Jew and the Other: Doubtful and Multiple Identities in the Roman Empire,” in *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern*, ed. Lee I. Levine and Daniel R. Schwartz (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 136–46.

31. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 49. Cf. Cookie White Stephan and Paul Stephan, “What Are the Functions of Ethnic Identity?” in *We Are a People: Narrative and Multiplicity in Constructing Ethnic Identity*, ed. Paul Spickard and W. Jeffrey Burroughs (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 231.

32. See in particular Royce, *Ethnic Identity*, 1–33, Tajfel, *Social Identity*, 2, Stanley, “Neither Jew Nor Greek,” 110, Paul Spickard and W. Jeffrey Burroughs, eds., *We Are a People: Narrative and Multiplicity in Constructing Ethnic Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 49–50 and Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race?: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 2–13.

Social Identity Theory

While the boundary markers observed above will be useful in identifying the way in which the Christ-following group identified itself in the first century, equally useful will be Paul's presentation of the group as a viable option, as a group which offered members some benefit through membership. One aspect of sociological enquiry, termed Social Identity Theory, addresses this aspect of benefits gained by membership in a given identity group.

Philip Esler has done extensive work in incorporating Social Identity Theory into his examinations of the letters of Paul, and these works will contribute to our argument that Paul sought, in part, to create boundaries around a new layer of group identity for the members of his Christ-following communities. Drawing primarily on the works of Henri Tajfel, Esler describes Social Identity Theory as featuring elements of:

- 1) the cognitive dimension, which is the simple recognition of belonging to a group;
- 2) the evaluative dimension, which covers the positive or negative connotations of belonging;
- 3) the emotional dimension, which refers to attitudes members hold toward insiders and outsiders.³³

Note that the first and third elements of this, the cognitive and emotional dimensions, reflect elements present in both Barth and Smith's work on the study of ethnicity and ethnic groups; the 'simple recognition of belonging to a group' echoes Barth and Smith's claims that individuals are a group only if they want to be one, while the element which 'refers to attitudes...toward insiders and outsiders' echoes the sense of

33. Philip F. Esler, *Galatians* (London: Routledge, 1998), 42. drawing on Henri Tajfel, *Differentiation Between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (London: Academic Press, 1978), 28. Cf. Philip F. Esler, "'Keeping It in the Family': Culture, Kinship and Identity in 1 Thessalonians and Galatians," in *Families and Family Relations as Represented in Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Texts and Fictions*, ed. Jan W. van Henten and Athayla Breener (Leiden: DEO Pub., 2000), 158.

solidarity present in identifiable communities. The second element of Social Identity Theory, however, is not present in Barth or Smith's work on group identity construction. Esler's examinations of primarily the letter to the Galatians through the lens of Social Identity Theory emphasises Paul's desire and the necessity to present the new identity group, that is, the Christ-following communities, 'by developing the evaluative dimension [focused on 'positive and negative connotations of belonging'] through drawing out the positive aspects of belonging to the ingroup...as compared with the negatively evaluated outgroups.'³⁴ I will refer to Esler's examinations regarding Social Identity Theory in Paul, particularly in terms of the evaluative dimension, at various points throughout this study, in order further to demonstrate Paul's work to erect and maintain boundaries around a new aspect of group identity.

With these modern studies of identity providing a foundation, we can begin our examination of identity in the ancient world, and demonstrate the applicability of these boundary marking features of an identifiable group. The remainder of this chapter will examine the way scholars, both ancient and modern, have dealt with the issue of group identity formation and maintenance for ancient identity groups, primarily the Greeks, Jews and the early Christ-followers. It goes without saying that the field of identity formation in the ancient world is vast, and it must be noted that, in addition to those works surveyed here, there are enough volumes on Jewish and Christian identity to fill a library; to survey them all would require a lengthy work dedicated solely to that task. The following survey, then, is admittedly limited in scope, compared to the myriad works which exist on this topic. Those works which are surveyed here represent a number of things; in many cases, the work represents a seminal or widely accepted foundation for the field of study. In other instances, those works surveyed cover topics

34. Esler, *Galatians*, 42–43.

closely related to the aim of this study, to further illuminate the origins of the Christ-following identity.

Studies of Greek Identity

Jonathan Hall has written extensively on the subject of ancient Greek identity, and notes that, prior to the fifth century BCE, Greek identity was determined primarily ‘through myths of ethnic origins which spoke not only of ethnic ancestors but also of primordial territories.’³⁵ He traces the ancestor myth back to the king Hellen, from which is derived the name Ἑλλήν, and to his sons Aiolos and Doros, and his grandsons Ion and Akhaïos. From these four we get the names Aiolian, Dorian, Ionian and Akhaian, the four primary subgroups of the Hellenic identity group.³⁶ Thus, Greek identity in its earliest form was based ‘not on difference from the barbarian but on similarity with peer groups which attempted to attach themselves to one another by invoking common descent from Hellen.’³⁷ The shift toward what Hall describes as ‘oppositional’ self-definition occurred during the attempted Persian invasion of Greece, during which these related-but-separate groups came together as Hellenes to face a common foe; the Greek/barbarian dichotomy came to prominence during this conflict. In what is perhaps the most well known passage of his *Histories*, the Greek author Herodotus recounts the famed Battle of Thermopylae, in which the vastly outnumbered Greek forces withstand the Persian onslaught, and he lists the groups of which the Greek

35. Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 40.

36. Chapter 3 of Hall’s work, ‘The discursive dimension of ethnic identity’, pp 34-66, examines much historical evidence for this, including Homer, Thucydides and Pseudo-Hesiod. In particular, see Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 42–43.

37. Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 47.

army was comprised: Spartans, Tegeans, Mantineans, Arcadians, Corinthians, Phlians, Mycenaeans, Peloponnesians, Boetians, Thespians, Thebans, Locrians, Pochians, and Athenians (*Histories* 7.138-239).³⁸ Each of these groups, often taking their names from the regions which they occupied, belong to one of the four Hellenic subgroups mentioned above, but each came to the defence of Greece as Greeks. Herodotus himself makes this clear later in his work, recounting the Athenian explanation as to why they rejected an offer of peace from Xerxes, the Persian ruler, before the battle of Plataea in 479 BCE. He writes:

‘Then there is *the Greek people*, which has *the same blood* and *the same language*, together with *the common cult places*, *the sacrifices* and *the similar customs*, which it would be ignoble for Athens to betray.’ (*Histories* 8.144; my emphases)³⁹

The emphasised portions of this each represent a feature of identity formation laid out above, and are indicative of the group identified. Here, we find four of the six features explicitly stated, and the remaining two implied: there is a proper name for the group (‘the *Greek people*’); a sense of common ancestry and kinship (‘which has the same blood’); a common culture, which in this case includes religion and language; a sense of solidarity against a foreign entity (noting that ‘it would be ignoble...to betray’ the Greeks to the Persians); a link to a homeland (implied in the name ‘Greek,’ which is

38. This translation is taken from A.D. Godley’s 1922 translation in the LCL’s *Herodotus*.

39. Rosalind Thomas writes at length about the shortcomings of scholarship regarding concepts of ethnicity in Herodotus, noting that, despite most scholarship’s citation of the above passage, ‘there seems to be no single sense of ethnicity in the *Histories*.’ She continues: ‘...it seems unlikely, then, that Herodotus’ conception of the Greek world and Hellenism should be based on a single simplistic idea of the Greek character [cited above]’; Rosalind Thomas, “Ethnicity, Genealogy, and Hellenism in Herodotus,” in *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, ed. Irad Malkin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 217–18. My only response to this is that I am not writing about what Herodotus himself thought the ‘idea of the Greek character’ was. Rather, I am using his text as an indication of a shift in the common perception of Greek character following the Persian War, a shift which may be seen to continue in later works, but which finds its earliest reference in the *Histories*. Herodotus’ statement is but a stepping stone along the path of development toward a pervasive Greek culture.

derived from ‘Greece,’ and the acknowledgement of ‘common cult places’); and a common history (implied in the name ‘Greek,’ their sense of kinship, and their common culture). In other words, because of their ‘aggregative’ definition, that of ancestry and kinship, the disparate Greek sub-groups were able to come together against a common foe, and to exhibit an identity which existed *over* the various sub-groups to which they also belonged.⁴⁰ Here, then, we can observe one of the earliest instances of multiple group identification, and evidence of identities which exist over but alongside other identities.

But the definition of Greek identity continued to evolve, and changed drastically in the years between the fifth century BCE and the first century CE. Shaye Cohen observes this shift, and locates its origins in the fourth century BCE, noting that ‘...with the rise of the Macedonians and the creation of the Hellenistic empires, ‘common blood’ became much less important, and ‘common language’ and ‘common way of life’ became much more important’ in defining who was and was not a member of Greek identity.⁴¹ However, Hall traces this same evolution in *Hellenicity*, and suggests that Greek identity began to encompass those ruled by the Greeks so fully that it eventually became a ‘culture,’ rather than what we would consider an ‘ethnic group,’ as early as the end of the fifth century BCE. These features continued to play a prominent role in Greek identity and following the spread of Hellenism under Alexander the Great, common

40. The terms ‘aggregative’ and ‘oppositional’ are taken from Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 47.

41. Shaye J.D. Cohen, “Religion, Ethnicity and ‘Hellenism’ in the Emergence of Jewish Identity in Maccabean Palestine,” in *Religion and Religious Practice in the Seleucid Kingdom*, ed. Pers Bilde, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Lise Hannestad, and Jan Zahle (Aarhus University: Aarhus University Press, 1990), 219–20.

cultural elements came to play an even greater role in identifying members of the Greek identity group.⁴²

A mere fifty years after Herodotus, in the writings of Isocrates, Hall notes the following passage as evidence that Greek identity, as it had been understood, was evolving to include those who, in earlier understandings of Greek identity, would never have been considered Greek. Here, we see a clear indication that custom, rather than any other feature, is becoming the primary defining feature of the Greek identity group:

‘And so far has our city distanced the rest of mankind in thought and in speech that her pupils have become the teachers of the rest of the world; and she has brought it about that *the name ‘Hellenes’ suggests no longer a race* (τοῦ γένους) but an intelligence, and that the title ‘Hellenes’ is *applied rather to those who share our culture than to those who share a common blood.*’ (*Panegyricus* 50; my emphases)

Note again the appearance of several distinguishing features from our list, in this case, a common name, common ancestry and a common culture, each of which is present in the list provided by Herodotus, as well. But unlike Herodotus, Isocrates is not holding up common ancestry as a key feature of Greek identity. Instead, he is dismissing it from the list of features which would grant one the title of ‘Greek,’ because ‘the old tribal subdivision...based on dialects..., common myths of descent with eponymous ancestors, and common place of origin’ found in Herodotus ‘has nearly disappeared’ by the time of Isocrates.⁴³ But even though this evolution began in the years before the formation of the Hellenistic empires, Hall, like Cohen, gives the Macedonians their due. Within a century of Isocrates, Philip II of Macedon would unite the disparate Greek city-

42. Cf. Hall, *Hellenicity*, in which he explores the shift of Greek ethnic identity into a pervasive Hellenic culture.

43. Suzanne Saïd, “The Discourse of Identity in Greek Rhetoric from Isocrates to Aristides,” in *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, ed. Irad Malkin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 277.

states under his rule, and his son Alexander the Great would proceed to conquer most of the Mediterranean region around Greece and to create an empire which reached as far as the Indian sub-continent.⁴⁴ That the rulers of this northern region were able to become the leaders of a Hellenic empire was only possible because of the evolution of Greek identity that began at the end of the fifth century BCE.

The continuing evolution of Greek identity can be clearly seen in the first century BCE writings of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. He does not provide a list of what determines who is a Greek; rather, Dionysius writes about how one can cease to be a Greek:

‘For many others by living among barbarians have in a short time forgotten all their Greek heritage, so that *they neither speak the Greek language nor observe the customs of the Greeks nor acknowledge the same gods nor have the same equitable laws* (by which most of all the spirit of the Greeks differs from that of the barbarians) nor agree with them in anything else whatever that relates to the ordinary intercourse of life.’ (*Roman Antiquities* 1.89.4; my emphasis)

By discussing what makes someone not a Greek, Dionysius defines Greek identity as those ‘speaking the Greek language...having a Greek way of life...acknowledging the same gods and having fitting, reasonable laws,’⁴⁵ each of which represents a boundary marking feature suggested by Hutchinson and Smith. From this definition, it may be surmised that, as Alexander and the Greeks conquered and settled throughout the Mediterranean, the different peoples they encountered and ruled began to

44. It is worth noting a certain irony in this; the Hellenic peoples were united by Philip, and what we now call Hellenism was spread primarily because of Alexander, but prior to this, Macedonians were considered to be ‘barbarians,’ not unlike the Persians, by much of Greece. See Jonathan M. Hall, “Contested Ethnicity: Perceptions of Macedonia Within Evolving Definitions of Greek Identity,” in *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, ed. Irad Malkin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 159–61 for a survey of ancient sources regarding the Greekness, or lack thereof, of the Macedonians.

45. Hall, *Hellenicity*, 224.

adopt these features of Hellenism: Greek became the common spoken language; Greek laws were adopted (or imposed) throughout the conquered territories; and the philosophical and intellectual prominence of the Greeks was taken up by others. This development may also be observed in the late first century or early second century CE writings of Dio Chrysostom, who writes that ‘those who have in common Hellas’ do not share a common territory or old tribal subdivisions or an oppositional identity against an outside group; rather, they share a Greek culture, possibly typified in the Greek language.⁴⁶ For Dio, the distinguishing features which mark someone as part of Greek identity, rather than as a member of the Greek culture, are ‘ancestors, gods, customs (*ethos*) and festivals’ (38.46). Here, we see a return of ‘ancestors’, that is, a sense of common biological ties, to the sign posts which mark out Greek identity. Suzanne Saïd determines from this that language, thought, manners, and dress become the ‘true indicia of Greekness.’⁴⁷ These signposts, then, point to membership in Greek identity. But Greekness and a Greek are two different things, as we have seen; nearly everyone in the Mediterranean participated in ‘Greekness’ to one degree or another, yet in many instances were still able to maintain membership in identifiable groups which were not Greeks. Of all the identity groups which existed under the growing Greek influence, the best example of maintaining an identity in the face of an overarching culture force was the Jewish identity group.

46. See Saïd, “Discourse of Identity,” 286–87. Cf. Dio’s *Olympicus*, 12.42, 49, 56, 74, 85; 31.18, 157; 33.57.

47. Saïd, “Discourse of Identity,” 290.

Studies of Jewish Identity

In ‘Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew’, Shaye Cohen explores the ways in which non-Jews were able to, as the title states, cross the boundaries between Jews and non-Jews and become part of the Jewish community. In focusing on what was necessary for a non-Jew to gain status as a Jew, Cohen’s work also illustrates what Jews used to define themselves, what features they viewed as important in setting themselves apart, what signposts marked out the Jewish identity group. He begins by listing seven ways in which ‘a gentile can show respect or affection for Judaism’:

(1) admiring some aspect of Judaism; (2) acknowledging the power of the god of the Jews or incorporating him into the pagan pantheon; (3) benefiting the Jews or being conspicuously friendly to Jews; (4) practising some or many of the rituals of the Jews; (5) venerating the god of the Jews and denying or ignoring the pagan gods; (6) joining the Jewish community; (7) converting to Judaism and ‘becoming a Jew.’⁴⁸

This last option, converting to Judaism, ‘entails three elements: practice of the Jewish laws (category 4); exclusive devotion to the god [sic]⁴⁹ of the Jews (category 5); and integration into the Jewish community (category 6).’⁵⁰ Two of these three elements are religious, exclusive devotion to the god of the Jews and practice of the Jewish laws, which are taken from Scripture. And though he ultimately concludes that converts to Judaism would only be seen as proselytes in the eyes of natural-born Jews, Cohen does determine that the ‘convert or proselyte ‘becomes a Jew’ by believing in the god of the Jews, by abstaining from actions prohibited by the god and by performing other actions

48. Shaye J.D. Cohen, “Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew,” *HTR* 82, no. 1 (1989): 14–15.

49. Cohen, ‘in order to reflect a pagan’s perspective,’ writes ‘the word ‘god’ with a lower-case “g” no matter which divinity is intended.’ Cohen, “Crossing the Boundary,” 14.

50. Cohen, “Crossing the Boundary,” 26.

mandated by the god, and by joining the Jewish community.’⁵¹ Cohen, then, concludes that, to become a Jew, one must adhere to the religious traditions of the Jews, even if naturally-born Jews would not have viewed the convert as a full member of the community. This is illuminating in our examination of how Jews understood themselves; keeping in mind the conclusions of Barth, Hutchinson and Smith, it is those features which the group itself identifies as important in their self-definition which are most important. In Cohen’s estimation, Jews in antiquity viewed their religious traditions as the most important distinguishing feature of their identity group, without which one could not be considered part of the Jewish identity group. We find in the texts of the Tanakh that the boundary markers of identity so far discussed are all present.

That the proper name for the *identity group*, Israel or Judaea,⁵² stems from Jacob and his sons, even though ancestral claims are often traced back to Abraham, is not surprising; to take a name relating, somehow, to Abraham, or even his son Isaac, would be to change the boundary erected by this proper name. Abraham’s covenant passed to his second son, Isaac, thus excluding his first son, Ishmael (Gen. 16-17). However, Ishmael, like Isaac, is the father of ‘a great nation’ (Gen. 25), though this nation is not part of the Jewish identity group. Similarly, Jacob’s twin brother, Esau, is excluded from the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 25-28), and thus from Jewish identity; it is necessary, then, to erect a boundary based only on the specifically Jewish ancestors of Jacob and his sons, particularly Judah.

These first two boundaries affect all of the other boundaries, as well. Though the descendants of Ishmael and Esau (traditionally, the Arabs and Edomites, respectively)

51. Cohen, “Crossing the Boundary,” 31.

52. Jacob is first given the name ‘Israel’ (Gk. Ἰσραήλ) in Gen. 32:28, while Judah is born in Gen. 29:35. All of the sons of Jacob father a tribe, but it is from the tribe Judah that the southern kingdom takes its name, and from this that the later Greek and Roman names, ἡ Ἰουδαία and *Iudaea*, are derived.

share certain historical events and figures, such as Abraham, Noah, the Flood, and the Fall, by narrowing the definition of Jewish identity to the Israelites, these groups are excluded from key Jewish events, heroes and their commemorations. The figure of Moses is identified as being a member of the tribe of Levi, another of Jacob's sons (Ex. 2:1) who settled with his brothers and their families in Egypt, suggesting that the events of the Exodus are unique to the descendants of Jacob. This also provides the Jewish identity group the promise of a homeland (Canaan, which is finally attained by the Israelites in the Book of Joshua), and several cultural features. However, neither this homeland, nor many of these cultural features are unique to the Jewish identity group. The land of Canaan is filled with various peoples with whom the Jews must contend, and several of whom are incorporated into the kingdom of Israel by David (e.g., the Moabites and Edomites; cf. 2 Sam. 8). And as we have seen, circumcision, often taken as a key distinguishing feature of a Jew in the ancient world, was not unique to the Jews. Herodotus attributed the practice to the Colchians, Egyptians and Ethiopians (*Histories* 2.104.2-3), but even in the Hebrew Scriptures themselves, the Israelites are not the only people to practice circumcision. All of the descendants of Abraham are circumcised, including Ishmael (Gen. 17:25), Esau,⁵³ and their descendants.

Even the language of the Israelites, presumably Hebrew, and later Aramaic, was not unique to the descendants of the sons of Jacob; throughout the Pentateuch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons are able to communicate with the peoples around them. That very little emphasis was placed on maintaining a unique language amongst the Chosen People is evidenced in Nehemiah 13:23-25:

‘In those days also I saw the Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab, and half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah, but the

53. This may be assumed, though it is never explicitly stated.

language of each people. And I contended with them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair; and I made them take oath in the name of God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves."

Though the prophet, in this case, is angry that these children 'could not speak the language of Judah,' it is clear that most Jews at that time were not concerned about this.⁵⁴ This trend would continue well into the Hellenistic and Roman periods; that many Jewish texts were originally produced in Greek in these periods, and that the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek, also offers evidence that language was not as important to Jewish identity as other features. This passage also demonstrates a Jewish custom against intermarriage with other groups, presumably in order to protect those things which were unique to the Jewish identity group. Similar injunctions against intermarriage may be found throughout the Hebrew Bible (cf. Gen. 28:1; Deut. 7:2-3; Josh. 23:12-13; Ezra 9-10; et alia).

That these boundary markers are all present in the sacred texts of the Jewish people also emphasises the importance of religion and religious practice to the Jewish identity group. Cohen goes on to reassert the importance of religion in Jewish identity in his 'Religion, Ethnicity, and 'Hellenism' in the Emergence of Jewish Identity in Maccabean Palestine.'

In this work, Cohen maintains that Jewish identity in the first century developed as a direct result of the Maccabean period, 'because it was only then that an ethnic or 'national' self-definition was supplemented by a 'cultural' or 'religious' self-

54. Tessa Rajak, "Ethnic Identities in Josephus," in *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction* (Boston: Brill, 2002), 138 notes that in Josephus' works '[t]he criterion for Jewishness is not primarily linguistic, since for the most part the Jews spoke Aramaic in Palestine, thus sharing the language of the region. Hebrew was adopted in limited circles, for specific, ideological purposes.' Cf. S. Schwartz, "Language, Power and Identity in Ancient Palestine," *Past and Present* 148 (1995): 1-47. It would seem, then, that despite Nehemiah's objections, 'the language of Judah' did not become the primary spoken tongue.

definition.⁵⁵ He begins by discussing the possible meanings of the Greek word Ἰουδαῖος, from which we derive ‘Judaean’, a term which originates in this period; he concludes that Ἰουδαῖος can mean one of four things: 1) a Jew by birth or nationality (that is, one born into the Jewish *identity group*, whether within or outside the land of Judaea); 2) a Jew by manner of life (that is, one who adheres to Jewish religion); 3) an inhabitant of Judaea (that is, one who has settled in Judaea); and 4) an inhabitant of a state controlled by the Jews (much in the same way that those controlled by Greeks came in many ways to be thought of as Greeks).⁵⁶ In Cohen’s opinion, only the first two categories, a Jew by birth or nationality and a Jew by manner of life, may be given the title ‘Jew;’ inhabitants of Judaea and states controlled by the Jews should properly be considered ‘Judaean.’ Thus, only categories one and two contribute to Jewish identity, the former being an ethnic category, and the second a religious or cultural one. Prior to the Maccabean period, a Gentile, then, could never convert and become a Jew in the sense of category one, because one cannot change one’s location of national origin, but could convert and become a Jew in the sense of category two, by adopting Jewish religious traditions.⁵⁷ However, this began to change following the rise of Hellenism under Alexander the Great. Prior to this, *Ioudaioi* were linked together by common

55. Cohen, “Emergence of Jewish Identity,” 204.

56. Cohen, “Emergence of Jewish Identity,” 204–09. These four categories are broken down into several sub-categories each. For example, under the first category, a Jew by birth or nationality, Cohen notes that ‘The original meaning of the term *Ioudaios* is ‘a member of the tribe of Judah....’ However, the term could also be applied to others. He notes: ‘Until the time of Augustus...the Alexandrian Jewish community was headed by an *ethnarch*...,’ that is, a leader of the nation or people group, and thus the term Ἰουδαῖος could be applied to a member of that *ethnos*, one under the authority of the *ethnarch*. Cf. Emil Schürer, Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black, eds., *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 2000), III, 92–93.

57. It seems this remained true into the first century CE. E.g., for Josephus, ‘the Jews are an ἔθνος or γένος, to which affiliation in differing degrees is possible by conversion’; Rajak, “Ethnic Identities in Josephus,” 138.

blood, common language..., a common mode of worshipping God, and a common way of life.’ Note that here we have four of the features laid out by Hutchinson and Smith: common ancestry, elements of common culture, a sense of solidarity (implied in ‘a common way of life’), and a proper name for the group, *Ioudaioi*.

Cohen does not address the two missing features, shared historical memories or a link with a homeland. He does, however, note that in the Maccabean period ‘common blood remained important, common language became much less important, and common mode of worship and common way of life became much more important, in the new definition of *Ioudaios*.’⁵⁸ With this shift, the two meanings of Ἰουδαῖος which Cohen identified as defining a Jew became much more closely intertwined; as Hellenistic culture enveloped the people of Judaea, religion came to play a much more prominent role in Jewish self-identification. Ἰουδαῖος ‘always retained its ethnic or national component,’ but more and more it ‘also came to designate someone of whatever nationality who accepted certain ‘cultural’ or ‘religious’ norms....’⁵⁹ Indeed, in an essay entitled ‘Those Who Say They Are Jews and Are Not: How Do You Know a Jew in Antiquity When You See One?’, Cohen goes into great detail about just how indistinguishable Jews were from other peoples in antiquity.

Looking at Greek and Roman authors between the fourth century BCE and the first century CE, Cohen notes that ‘not a single ancient author says that Jews are distinctive because of their looks, clothing, speech, names, or occupations’,⁶⁰ though they are often negatively portrayed as ‘misanthropic, self-sufficient, unwilling to share a

58. Cohen, “Emergence of Jewish Identity,” 220.

59. Cohen, “Emergence of Jewish Identity,” 220.

60. Shaye J.D. Cohen, “Those Who Say They Are Jews and Are Not: How Do You Know a Jew in Antiquity When You See One?” in *Diasporas in Antiquity*, ed. Shaye J.D. Cohen and Ernest S. Frerichs (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), 3.

table with any but their own kind or even to render basic human assistance' by Greco-Roman (and later Christian) authors.⁶¹ Jews and non-Jews in antiquity were 'corporeally, visually, linguistically, and socially indistinguishable.'⁶² Cohen then attempts to answer the question, how were Jews distinguishable? To this end, he presents the practise of circumcision as a possible distinguishing feature; Stanley, too, held this as one of the key features by which Jews were distinguished from others, calling it a 'physical mark' that separated them.⁶³ However, Cohen maintains that 'circumcision would have functioned as a or the marker of Jewishness...but not in all times and not in all places. On the Jewish side, circumcision became *the* marker of Jewish identity - at least in Palestine - in the Maccabean period.'⁶⁴ Further, circumcision became the key identifying feature of Jews in the Roman Empire, particularly under Domitian (81-96 CE); at this time, 'if you were circumcised, you were Jewish.'⁶⁵ But in the eastern parts of the empire, up to and including the first century CE, circumcision was not the sole purview of the Jews. Cohen cites Herodotus' claim that the Colchians, Egyptians, and Ethiopians 'are the only nations that have from the first practised circumcision' (*Histories* 2.104.2-

61. Tessa Rajak, "The Jewish Community and Its Boundaries," in *The Jews Among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire*, ed. Judith Lieu, John North, and Tessa Rajak (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 9. Cf. Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities), v.1 (1974) and 2 (1980). Erich S. Gruen, "Kinship Relations and Jewish Identity," in *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern*, ed. Lee I. Levine and Daniel R. Schwartz (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 101–16, however, offers the interesting observation that, despite this seemingly ethno-centric attitude, several stories and myths present the Jewish identity group as being the progenitor of various other groups, such as the kings of Africa (108-110) and the Spartans (110-111), a connection which 'underlines Jewish precedence' (111), and which demonstrates that 'Jews could also visualize themselves as part of a broader cultural heritage' (116) which was connected to other identity groups.

62. Cohen, "Those Who Say," 10.

63. See note 27.

64. Cohen, "Those Who Say," 13.

65. Cohen, "Those Who Say," 16.

3), and concludes that ‘we may assume that in the first century CE in portions of Asia minor, Syria, Arabia and perhaps Egypt, circumcision will not have been unusual and certainly will not have been a Jewish peculiarity.’⁶⁶ Thus, even the only Jewish physical difference from the majority of other people in the Greco-Roman world, circumcision, was not distinguishing.⁶⁷ To answer his question of how were Jews distinguished, Cohen is left with no option but to identify the practice of ‘Jewish customs’;⁶⁸ Rajak agrees, noting that Philo explained the distinct nature of Jews ‘in terms of the distinctiveness of Jewish customs’⁶⁹ (cf. *Moses* 1.278). However, even this would not always be sufficient to distinguish a Jew from a non-Jew, as many non-Jews, particularly in the first century CE, practised Jewish customs to one degree or another.⁷⁰ In the introduction of *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, Cohen’s examination of the emergence and maintenance of a distinct Jewish identity in the Greco-Roman world, he writes: ‘For ancient Greeks and contemporary social scientists, ‘religion’ is only one of many items that make a culture or a group distinctive.’⁷¹ He then sets out again to make the case that Jewish identity was

66. Cohen, “Those Who Say,” 18–19.

67. Stanley, “‘Neither Jew Nor Greek’,” 111–13 does concede that circumcision would only have served as a physical identifier for males in the Jewish identity group, and then only in specific situations such as at the baths.

68. Cohen, “Those Who Say,” 29–35.

69. Rajak, “The Jewish Community,” 9.

70. It should be noted that Cohen does not seem to mean the so-called ‘race of the God-fearers’; rather, he means sympathizers toward the Jewish faith. Judith Lieu notes that it is clear that such ‘Gentile sympathizers’ did exist, and cites several texts which demonstrate this, notably: Juvenal, *Sat.* 14.96–106; Josephus, *War* 7.3.3; cf. *c. Apion* 2.10; and ‘the implied audience of some Hellenistic Jewish literature’: Judith M. Lieu, “The Race of the God-Fearers,” in *Neither Jew Nor Greek? Constructing Early Christianity*, Judith M. Lieu (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 50–51. For a full discussion on the distinction between ‘God-fearers’ and sympathizers, see Folker Siegert, “Gottesfürchtige und Sympathisanten,” *JSJ* 4, no. 2 (1973): 110–19.

71. Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 8.

distinguished by a combination of ‘ethnic,’ a term which Cohen uses in place of ‘geographic,’⁷² and religious factors.

He begins by again laying out the possible meanings of the word Ἰουδαῖος as ethnic (that is, geographic), religious, or political (he combines two of his original categories, inhabitants of Judaea and those conquered by Jews, into this single category);⁷³ the first category, ethnic, ‘is closed, immutable, an ascribed characteristic based on birth,’⁷⁴ while the latter two, religious and political, are mutable. During the Maccabean period, ‘the ethnic definition was supplemented...by the religious definition. Jewishness became an ethno-religious identity.’⁷⁵

Cohen’s emphasis on the Maccabean period as the source of an ethno-religious identity finds much support in texts from the Maccabean period. In 167 BCE, Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Seleucia tried to suppress the religious practices of the Jews and convert them to Hellenistic-style worship by dedicating the Jerusalem Temple to Zeus, head of the Greek pantheon.⁷⁶ The Jewish revolt that followed, led by Matthias and later his son Judah the Maccabee, demonstrates how important this religious component was to Jewish identity; they were ultimately successful, and allowed to continue their traditional religious practices.

72. He writes: ‘...the history of the word *Ioudaios* demonstrates that before the second or first century B.C.E. we can speak not of ‘Jewishness’ but of ‘Judaeaness.’ ‘Judaeaness’ was a function of birth and geography; *Ioudaioi* belong to the *ethnos* of Judaeans in Judaea. Even when Judaeans left their homeland to live in the diaspora, they maintained themselves as ethnic associations. Ethnic (or ethnic-geographic) identity is immutable; non-Judaeans cannot become Judaeans any more than non-Egyptians can become Egyptians....’ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 109.

73. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 70–81 See also Ross Kraemer, “On the Meaning of the Term ‘Jew’ in Greco-Roman Inscriptions,” *HTR* 82 (1989): 35–53.

74. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 136.

75. Here, Cohen notes that he ‘borrowed’ the term ‘ethno-religious identity’ from Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism*, 201–03. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 137.

76. Schürer, Vermes, Millar, and Black, *The History of the Jewish People*, 138–63.

However, despite the fact that the Jews resisted the religions of the dominant culture around them, as reflected in the literature, all Jews in the Greco-Roman world were influenced by Hellenistic culture to one degree or another; it was encountered by everyone in the Mediterranean in their daily lives.⁷⁷ Nowhere in the books of Maccabees do we find lists of distinguishing ethnic features, as we did in the Greek writers surveyed in this study; this is unsurprising, given that 1-4 Maccabees are more concerned with recounting the events of the Maccabean revolt and the following years than with discussing ethnic groups. However, it is made abundantly clear in the books that the Jews are a distinct group from the others around them. This is not stated in terms of how the Jews distinguished themselves, but in terms of how Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid king, tried to erase the differences between the Jews and the other peoples under his rule. This is recorded in 1 Macc. 1:41-50:

‘Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, and that each should give up his customs. All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the sabbath. And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane sabbaths and feasts, to defile the sanctuary and the priests, to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and unclean animals, and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, so that they should forget the law and change all the ordinances. “And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die.”’

Antiochus, then, attempted to stamp out the differences between the Jews and the non-Jews by eliminating those things which were peculiarly Jewish, that is, features of

77. John M. G. Barclay, “‘Neither Jew Nor Greek’: Multiculturalism and the New Perspective on Paul,” in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2002), 209. Cf. Tessa Rajak, “Jews and Christians as Groups in a Pagan World,” in *“To See Ourselves as Others See Us”: Christians, Jews, “Others” in Late Antiquity*, ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 250.

their religious traditions. Here, the author of 1 Maccabees specifically cites sacrifices, holy days, religious places and figures, Torah laws regarding cleanliness, and circumcision as those things which Antiochus sought to remove as unique markers of Jewish identity, in order to create a more homogeneous realm. Each of these features represents some aspect of Jewish religious tradition, drawn from the Scriptures, as seen above. Following this decree, Antiochus profaned the Temple, and these acts eventually sparked the Maccabean revolt.

These boundary markers, drawn primarily from religious tradition, remained key to the definition and maintenance of the Jewish identity group, well into the first century. We find in the works of two first century Jewish authors, Philo of Alexandria and Josephus, further evidence that membership in the Jewish identity group was based in large part on these religiously focused features.

Writing during the latter half of the first century CE, Josephus ‘was characteristically an advocate of Hellenistic culture, yet...was also a vigorous defender of Judaism.’⁷⁸ A native of Judaea, he participated as a military leader in the Jewish revolt against Rome between 66-70 CE, when he was captured by the Roman forces. Following Vespasian’s rise to imperial power, Josephus wrote several works notably *The Jewish Antiquities* and *The Jewish War*. Philo, on the other hand, was a Diaspora Jew writing in the earlier half of the first century CE, and was a leader in the large Jewish community in the Egyptian city of Alexandria. Both Philo and Josephus were apologists for Judaism to the larger Greco-Roman world; in his work *Legatio ad Gaium*, Philo details the delegation of Alexandrian Jews he led to the Emperor Gaius Caligula to sue for Jewish rights, and Josephus, particularly in *Jewish Antiquities*, defends the customs and religion of the Jews to his Greco-Roman readers.

78. Luther H. Martin, *Hellenistic Religions: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 104.

As with the books of Maccabees, it is difficult to find any lists of distinguishing ethnic features in Philo and Josephus. In order to examine their conceptions of belonging to a particular identity group, particularly to the Jewish identity group, we must examine those few passages from their works in which the authors provide some insight into their lives; in other words, any self-descriptive information provided by Philo and Josephus will give us insight into how they viewed themselves and their identities.

Philo provides one such passage in his *Legatio Ad Gaium*. This text details the delegation of Alexandrian Jews which Philo led to the Roman Emperor Gaius Germanicus Caligula in order to seek protection of Jewish rights in the city. In this, he writes:

‘And I am, as you know, a Jew; and Jerusalem is my country, in which there is erected the holy temple of the most high God. And I have kings for my grandfathers and for my ancestors, the greater part of whom have been called high priests, looking upon their royal power as inferior to their office as priests; and thinking that the high priesthood is as much superior to the power of a king....’ (*Leg.* 278)

Note that here we find three of the features from our list of distinguishing ethnic identifiers, all of which are religious references: a name for the people (Jew), a link with a homeland (Jerusalem, which he calls his ‘country’ and which he identifies as being home to ‘the holy temple of the most high God’), and a claim to (presumably) common ancestors (in this case ‘kings,’ but kings who also were called ‘high priests’ and who viewed their religious duties as being more important than their kingly ones). Continuing, Philo identifies himself as belonging to ‘this nation,’ and as ‘being attached to this country and to such a temple,’ and claims to speak for the Jewish nation as a whole (*Leg.* 279), a nation which:

‘...is inferior to none whatever in Asia or in Europe, whether it be in respect of prayers, or of the supply of sacred offerings, or in the abundance of its sacrifices, not merely of such as are offered on occasions of the public festivals, but in those which are continually offered day after

day; by which means they show their loyalty and fidelity more surely than by their mouth and tongue, proving it by the designs of their honest hearts, not indeed saying that they are friends to Caesar, but being so in reality.' (*Leg.* 280)

Here again, Philo is highlighting the religious aspect of Jewish identity, noting that they are not 'inferior' to other groups in terms of religious sacrifices, but are in fact superior, because of the regularity and fervour with which they offer such sacrifices. He then proceeds to list all the places in the world which are home to Jewish colonies,⁷⁹ and concludes that:

'...if my native land is, as it reasonably may be, looked upon as entitled to a share in your favour; it is not one city only that would then be benefited by you, but ten thousand of them in every region of the habitable world, in Europe, in Asia, and in Africa, on the continent, in the islands, on the coasts, and in the inland parts.' (*Leg.* 283)

This statement is key, in that it identifies exactly who is considered part of Jewish identity; any person in all the world who fits those religious terms laid out above is, for Philo, a part of the Jewish identity group. For Philo, it is custom and belief that marks out a member of the Jewish identity group,⁸⁰ rather than geography; thus, Philo, an Alexandrian, can claim that 'Jerusalem is my country,' as can other practitioners of those same customs throughout the world.

79. These are: Judaea, Egypt, Phoenicia, 'Syria in general,' Coelo-Syria, Pamphylia, Cilicia, 'the greater part of Asia Minor as far as Bithynia, and the furthest corners of Pontus,' Europe, Thessaly, Boeotia, Macedonia, Aetolia, Attica, Argos, Corinth, many 'districts of [the] Peloponnesus,' Euboea, Cyprus, Crete, 'the countries beyond the Euphrates,' and Babylon (*Leg.* 281-282).

80. Rajak, "The Jewish Community," 9. Cf. John M.G. Barclay, "The Family as the Bearer of Religion in Judaism and Early Christianity," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 70, who notes that 'there is no good reason to doubt Philo when he claims that Jews have been trained...to honour the One God alone and to observe the Jewish law (e.g. *Legatio* 115, 210; *Praem.* 162; *Spec. Leg.* 1.314; 2.88; 4.149-50).' Barclay observes that Josephus makes a similar statement, insisting, like Philo, that 'the laws and the "ancestral customs"' have been "engraved" on the soul of every young Jew' (Josephus, *Apion* 2.178; cf. Philo, *Legatio* 210; *Spec. Leg.* 4.149).

Josephus seems to take a similar stand. Throughout his works, he makes reference to people who are ‘by birth a Jew’ (cf. *Ant.* 11:207; 18:103; 20:173; *War* 2:101; *Life* 1:382), though this does not necessarily mean that they were born in the land of Judaea. In fact, on several occasions Josephus specifically states that an individual was ‘by birth a Jew,’ and then offers a location of national origin. These locations include Sidon (*Ant.* 17:324; *War* 2:101), Coelosyria (*Apn.* 1:179), Rome (not stated, but implied in *Ant.* 17:141), and Judaea (*Ant.* 10:237); people from all over, then, may be ‘Jews by birth.’ Josephus also sets out to describe himself in his *Autobiography*, and begins with a genealogy linking him to his ancestors: ‘The family from which I am derived is not an ignoble one, but has descended all along from the priests...’ (*Life* 1:1). As with Philo, Josephus’ first claim is to religious figures of the past. Further, he defines Jewish identity in religious terms in his *Jewish Antiquities*, when he writes about control of the Temple. He notes that whomever controlled the Temple

‘had the whole nation under their power, for without the command of them it was not possible to offer their sacrifices; and to think of forsaking those sacrifices, is, to every Jew plainly impossible, who are still more ready to lose their lives than to stop that divine worship which they have been wont to pay to God.’ (*Ant.* 15:248)

Sacrifices in the Temple are key for Josephus; ‘every Jew,’ that is, every member of the Jewish identity group, must perform sacrifices, because to not perform them is to cease to worship God, and to cease to worship God is to cease being a Jew. In Josephus’ estimation, every Jew would willingly die before allowing that to happen.

In addition to this, it is possible to observe the criteria of group identity laid out by Hutchinson and Smith, and adopted throughout this study, in the works of Josephus. Philip Esler has conducted such a study,⁸¹ and those features he identifies in the first

81. Esler, “Judean Ethnic Identity.”

century texts are remarkably similar to those identified in the Hebrew Scriptures, above. In terms of common ancestry, Esler identifies Josephan appeal to Noah (*Apion* 1.130) and Abraham and his family (often called ‘Chaldaeans’ in the text; *Apion* 1.171);⁸² these two prominent figures, as well as that of Moses, contribute to the shared historical memories of the community.⁸³ Many elements of common culture from the Hebrew Scriptures are upheld within the work of Josephus, particularly adherence to the Law,⁸⁴ and Josephus reiterates the Judean link to a homeland, called Judea after the tribe of Judah;⁸⁵ Esler also notes that Josephus refers to the Judean community as Ἰουδαῖοι, a name which is itself derived from the name of their homeland.⁸⁶ Each of these features contributes to the final element of Jewish group identity, a sense of solidarity among members of the group.⁸⁷

It seems clear, then, that Jewish identity from at least the Maccabean period and possibly before, and well into the first century CE, was marked out in large part through aspects of their religious tradition.⁸⁸ I must note, however, that in the first century CE,

82. Esler, “Judean Ethnic Identity,” 80–81.

83. Esler, “Judean Ethnic Identity,” 82–83 notes that all people have histories, but that Josephus ‘makes the positive case that the history of the Judeans is particularly illustrious, having been noticed by non-Judeans in the past, and that the events associated with Moses...mean that the Judeans have a history that makes them the most outstanding people of all.’ He notes in particular Josephus’ claim at *Apion* 2.257 that Plato imitated Moses; cf. 1.253, 281; 2.157–163.

84. Esler, “Judean Ethnic Identity,” 83–86.

85. Esler, “Judean Ethnic Identity,” 86–88.

86. Esler, “Judean Ethnic Identity,” 80. He is careful to note that Josephus also uses the term Ἰσραηλίτης, Israelites, to refer to the Judean community, but he observes that this is an insider term, and derives from the name ‘Israel,’ that is, Jacob, the father of the Twelve Tribes.

87. Esler, “Judean Ethnic Identity,” 89.

88. Cf. Love Sechrest, *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race* (T&T Clark International, 2010), particularly 97.

religion was closely linked to every aspect of life, particularly in the social and political spectrums. The emperor of Rome, for example, was not only a political leader, but also served as *pontifex maximus*, the high priest of the Roman state religion, and was in fact deified by the cult of emperor worship. In the social sphere, nearly every aspect of life was in some way tied to religious worship, from meals to the food purchased at market to the public festivals at which citizens would congregate and interact. However, in the case of the Jewish identity group at this time, features of religious tradition were, in fact, used to separate the community in various aspects. While it was unavoidable that members of the Jewish identity group participate to some degree in the social and political spheres of Greco-Roman life, through their unique religious traditions they were able to remove themselves from the religious sphere. This is worth noting because in order for a group to distinguish itself from others, it must possess some unique features. In the case of the Jewish identity group in the first century, these unique features were primarily religious. This is not to say that these religious features did not influence the role played by members of the Jewish identity group in the political and social spheres of the first century CE, but merely to observe the prominent role these unique religious features played in distinguishing an identity group which participated in the dominant political and social world of Rome.

Studies of Christian Identity

Having examined modern conceptions of ethnicity, as well as how those features identified by modern scholars contributed to the formation of both Greek and Jewish identity from the fifth century BCE to the first century CE, we must now move to the main focus of this study, a first century CE Christ-following identity, and the apostle Paul. Before proceeding, it is worth noting that, though the focus of the remainder of this

chapter will be on studies of Paul and Christian identity, many of the scholars highlighted will discuss Paul and Christian identity in terms of Jewish identity, repeating many of the ideas laid out above. This repetition is unavoidable, however, as the earliest Christians, Paul included, emerged from the Judaism of the Second Temple period.⁸⁹ Philip Alexander states that ‘there was no sudden break between Christianity and Judaism, but rather an ever-widening rift,’⁹⁰ a sentiment that is pervasive throughout scholarship on Christian identity. Lawrence Schiffman also suggests that ‘as late as the end of the first century C.E.,’ Jews still regarded Jewish Christians (that is, Jews who became Christians) as Jews.⁹¹

We must begin with a brief note regarding the New Perspective on Paul. The New Perspective has played a prominent role in Pauline studies since its inception, and has in many ways changed scholarly approach to Pauline and Christian identity; it is of particular import to our study. This movement began in the late 1970s with the work of E. P. Sanders⁹² and, furthered by the scholarship of, notably, N. T. Wright and James D. G. Dunn,⁹³ this New Perspective challenges the long held notion that Paul portrays Judaism as little more than a set of laws that cannot bring true salvation, which is only

89. Cf. Philip S. Alexander, “‘The Parting of the Ways’ from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism,” in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*, James D. G. Dunn (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1992), 2 and Anthony J. Saldarini, “The Social World of Christian Jews and Jewish Christians,” in *Religious and Ethnic Communities in Later Roman Palestine*, ed. Hayim Lapin (Bethesda: University of Maryland Press, 1998), 118.

90. Alexander, “Parting of the Ways,” 3.

91. Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew? Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish Christian Schism* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav publishing House, Inc., 1985), 67.

92. E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1977).

93. It was Dunn who coined the term “the new perspective on Paul” in a lecture given in 1982, available in a number of sources, and most recently reprinted in James D.G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul: Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008).

gained through Christ. Dunn is perhaps the most provocative of early New Perspective scholars, observing that Paul has both positive and negative things to say regarding the law, and that his true objection is to the use of the law as a social barrier to others:

“‘Works of law’...are nowhere understood here, either by his Jewish interlocutors or by Paul himself, as works which *earn* God's favour, as merit-amassing observances. They are rather seen as *badges*: they are simply what membership of the covenant people involves, what mark out the Jews as God's people;...in other words, Paul has in view precisely what Sanders calls 'covenantal nomism.' And what he denies is that God's justification depends on 'covenantal nomism,' that God's grace extends only to those who wear the badge of the covenant.’⁹⁴

The New Perspective, then, represents a shift toward understanding Paul's writings in terms of first century Judaism. This is useful, in that it allows us to understand Paul in the context of his time, and the objection to Paul's use of the law as a social barrier suggests that the New Perspective understands Paul in a universal light, as one seeking to remove boundaries in his spreading of Christianity. Here, I differ from the views of the New Perspective. In my view, Paul was indeed removing some previously existing social barriers, but was at the same time erecting new ones around the emerging Christian identity, and several scholars make similar observations. Francis Watson puts forth the idea that Paul viewed Christianity as a sect outside of Judaism, rather than as a reform movement within it, and that many of his letters were intended to encourage Gentile and Jewish converts to unite as a movement outside Judaism.⁹⁵ Simon Gathercole notes that the focus of the New Perspective on circumcision, Sabbath observance and kosher laws is too narrow in terms of what Paul meant by ‘works of the law.’ He argues that Paul meant this as the whole law, rather than just those aspects of

94. James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1990), 194.

95. This in Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 38-49, 52, 100.

the law which came, in the Maccabean period, to most identify the Jews as a people, though he is careful to note that this is not a trend found throughout all New Perspective scholarship.⁹⁶

In *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, Daniel Boyarin also addresses the universalism of Paul. In an effort to ‘reclaim Pauline studies as an important, even an integral part of the study of Judaism,’ and to ‘reclaim Paul as an important Jewish thinker,’ Boyarin asserts that ‘Paul lived and died convinced that he was a Jew living out Judaism.’⁹⁷ That is to say, on Boyarin’s reading of Paul, he never surrendered his Judaism in favour of Christianity. Instead, ‘what motivated Paul ultimately was a profound concern for the one-ness of humanity,’⁹⁸ and this concern lead Paul to seek to answer the question: ‘how do the rest of the people in God’s world [i.e., the Gentiles] fit into the plan of salvation revealed to the Jews through their Torah?’⁹⁹ The answer, Boyarin maintains, was to expand the message of Judaism to include Gentiles; thus, what most consider Paul’s mission of Christian evangelism is, for Boyarin, Paul’s mission of Jewish evangelism.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, in Boyarin’s opinion, even

96. Simon J. Gathercole, “What Did Paul Really Mean? ‘New Perspective’ Scholars Argue That we Need, Well, a New Perspective on Justification by Faith,” *Christianity Today* 51, no. 8 (2007): 24–27. See also the Introduction to Simon J. Gathercole, *Where is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), especially 16–19, for further bibliography.

97. Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 1–2. This is similar to Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, *Heidenapostel Aus Israel: Die Jüdische Identität Des Paulus Nach Ihrer Darstellung in Seinen Briefen* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1992), who holds that Paul’s Jewish identity was key to his mission to the Gentiles, and was used to establish his authority to address the place of Christians in the law.

98. Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 52.

99. Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 85.

100. However, this sentiment has been heavily questioned: Beverly Gaventa notes that ‘...for Paul, the paramount event is God’s revelation in Jesus Christ...,’ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, “A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity Review,” *Theology Today* 52, no. 2 (1995): 292; for Adele Reinhartz, ‘...Paul’s own words indicate strongly that he saw himself not primarily as a cultural critic of

though ‘as early as the first century, Christians were...recognisable at least in some places as not-Jews,¹⁰¹ it is not until ‘sometime around the fourth century’ that ‘we can begin to speak of Judaism and Christianity as separate ‘religions’....’¹⁰²

John Barclay takes a view similar to Boyarin’s in *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, writing that ‘the Paul who preaches, disputes with Jews and Gentiles and writes to members of his churches is a Jew at work in the Diaspora.’¹⁰³ This is a strange claim for Barclay to make, considering that he observes that ‘Paul explicitly describes his aim as the creation of communities in which ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek’ (Gal. 3.28),’ a community in which ‘the ethnic identity of Paul’s converts was simply irrelevant,’¹⁰⁴ and that ‘the adulation accorded to Moses...is impossible for Paul, for whom the law-giver has been eclipsed by Christ.’¹⁰⁵ Barclay’s conclusion, similar to Cohen’s, that ‘Jewish identity in the Diaspora was not merely a matter of ancestry nor simply a question of cultural practice but was based on a combination of these two interlocking factors,’¹⁰⁶ suggests that a similar combination of ancestry and culture

Judaism but as an apostle of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles...,’ Adele Reinhartz, “A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity Review,” *Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History* 18 (1998): 104; and Christopher Rowland writes that Paul ‘set in motion...another kind of very particular community with its own boundaries - not the same as Judaism though in many respects overlapping with its ethos’, Christopher Rowland, “A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity Review,” *JJS* 47 (1996): 373.

101. Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 7. An example of this, though not cited by Boyarin himself, may be observed in the persecutions of Nero, as noted in the opening pages of this study.

102. Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 6.

103. John M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE - 117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 381.

104. John M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 385.

105. John M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 387.

106. John M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 403.

contributes to the identities of others. Paul, then, may not be a Jew working in the Diaspora, but something more, whose peculiar set of boundary markers set him apart in some way from Judaism.¹⁰⁷ But in his article “‘Neither Jew nor Greek’: Multiculturalism and the New Perspective on Paul,’ Barclay states that Paul ‘does not install Christ as the founder of a new culture, but indicates how commitment to Christ can simultaneously *encompass* various cultural particularities.’¹⁰⁸ This statement is very much in line with other scholarship, painting Paul as a universalising figure operating within an ancient tradition, while noting a simultaneous existence within another identity. Many other scholars also refer to these multiple levels or layers of identity present in Paul and his communities, as evidenced in his letters.

Philip Esler is one such scholar. We have already mentioned Esler’s application of Social Identity Theory to the study of Pauline Christianity, in which he suggests that Paul is presenting the Christ-following community as providing positive benefits to its members, the ‘evaluative dimension’ described in Tajfel’s work. Based on this, Esler maintains that, in Galatians, ‘Paul is concerned with maintaining the distinctive identity of his congregations in relation to the Israelite and gentile outgroups.’¹⁰⁹ Esler, then, is suggesting that Paul has created, or views himself as part of an already created group which is distinct in some way from the pre-existing Israelite and gentile groups. Further, Paul

107. In his review of this work Gerald Bray makes a similar criticism, stating that Barclay is ‘less surefooted in his treatment of the early Christians, and especially his chapter on Paul, which seems to be almost totally misguided’, in that Barclay focuses on Paul working as Jew in the Diaspora, rather than on Paul as ‘both a Hebrew of the Hebrews and an adept communicator to Gentiles.’ Gerald Bray, “Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan Review,” *Churchman* 111, no. 3 (1997): 268.

108. John M. G. Barclay, “Neither Jew Nor Greek,” 211.

109. Esler, *Galatians*, 42.

‘wishes to defend their distinctiveness not so much by reminding them of the fact of their membership (the cognitive dimension) as by developing the evaluative dimension through drawing out the positive aspects of belonging to the ingroup which accepts his version of the gospel as compared with the negatively evaluated outgroups.’¹¹⁰

Though he does not emphasise this point, Esler’s statement that, for Paul, the ingroup consists of those who accept ‘his version of the gospel’ suggests that the key distinction between the ‘distinctive’ communities founded by Paul and other groups was based in some cultural elements which were unique to those communities, and which helped Paul to present membership in these communities in a positive light. In later works, Esler notes that ‘Paul is ascribing an ethnic status and identity to the Galatian Christians,’ one, he claims, which is based on the Jewish claim of descent from Abraham and Sarah.¹¹¹ Paul, Esler suggests, wanted Christians ‘to see themselves as members of ἐκκλησία..., as ‘brethren’..., those justified in Christ..., members of the one household..., sons of God..., those who are one in Christ... and descendants of Abraham (and Sarah).’¹¹² He ultimately concludes that ‘Paul seeks to forge an identity distinct from both Jew and Gentile.’¹¹³ A brief note must be offered regarding Esler’s use of the term ‘distinct’ in his discussion of Christian identity. For many readers, the word ‘distinct’ implies ‘separate,’ that is, unattached to something else; in this case, calling the Christian groups ‘distinct’ might imply a complete separation from the Jewish parent body. This is not Esler’s intent. Rather, it seems that Esler is describing the Christian identity group as ‘unique’ among the Jews and Greeks, that is, something which may

110. Esler, *Galatians*, 42–43.

111. Philip F. Esler, “Group Boundaries and Intergroup Conflict in Galatians: A New Reading of Gal. 5:13–6:10,” in *Ethnicity in the Bible*, Mark G. Brett (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2002), 222.

112. Esler, “Group Boundaries,” 226.

113. Esler, “Group Boundaries,” 238

still belong or be related to these existing groups, but which displays unique features which identify the group as a unique entity within or related to them. In later works, Esler goes on to suggest an understanding of the Christ-following identity as one component of a system of multiple identities. This will be discussed further in following chapters, particularly Chapters 2 and 3.

In his 2003 work, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter*, Esler cites the list of distinguishing features laid out by Hutchinson and Smith, and sets up something of a hierarchy among them. He states that 'the most widespread of these features is the myth of common ancestry,' and that 'the second most common feature is...connection with a homeland.'¹¹⁴ Later, Esler notes that, at least in the case of Romans ascribing ethnic identity to others, 'the key element relied on was...their primary language.'¹¹⁵ Thus, if one primarily spoke Greek, one was a Greek in the view of the Romans. However, Esler states that 'religion is often one element in ethnic identity, although it is unhelpful to exaggerate its importance,'¹¹⁶ because ethnic identity involves elements of each of the six indicia. All of this contributes to his understandings of multiple identities in the Christ-following communities. While faith in Christ serves as a key identity feature and boundary marker for the community, those who have faith in Christ are comprised of individuals drawn from the Jewish and Greco-Roman identities, and that 'such identity will need to coexist with whatever remains of the members' original Judean and Greek identities.'¹¹⁷ As discussed above, it was nearly impossible to be completely removed from the social, political and religious spheres of

114. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 44.

115. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 58.

116. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 44.

117. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 140.

the Greco-Roman world, particularly because of the interrelated nature of each of these three areas of life at this time. However, as in the case of the Jewish identity group, the early Christ-followers were able to identify themselves as something unique in the ancient world, despite their participation in Greco-Roman society. As Esler notes, it is possible to possess elements of multiple identity groups, a phenomenon which is plainly evident in the nascent Pauline Christ-following communities.

Similarly, William S. Campbell argues in favour of the existence of multiple identities for Christ-followers in the first century, particularly as regards Judaism. Campbell asserts that Paul did not intend for his communities ‘to develop an entirely separate identity from Judaism’;¹¹⁸ rather, he suggests that ‘the Pauline communities had a distinct identity but one which was developed from and in relation to a Jewish symbolic universe’¹¹⁹ and that ‘far from opposing Jewish identity [as being incompatible with Christian identity], Paul seeks to make space to allow it to continue indefinitely.’¹²⁰ In Campbell’s view, Paul is not creating ‘a sectarian new religion’, nor is he reacting against Judaism; rather, he is ushering in ‘a transformation of...Judaism’, which ‘is in accord with Paul’s own understanding of new life in Christ.’¹²¹ He notes that Paul presents Jesus as both ‘descended from the house of David’ and as the ‘root of Jesse’, and also as the ‘son of God in power by the Spirit’, while Abraham is clearly identified as the father of both the circumcision and the uncircumcision. This, for Campbell,

118. William S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 66.

119. William S. Campbell, *Christian Identity*, 67.

120. William S. Campbell, *Christian Identity*, 94.

121. William S. Campbell, *Christian Identity*, 102.

demonstrates that ‘the distinction between Israel and the gentiles remains constant’ in Paul’s thinking regarding membership in the new Christian identity.¹²²

Judith Lieu has also written extensively on the formation of Christian identity in the ancient world, and dates the emergence of a ‘self-conscious ‘Christian’ identity’ to the second century ‘and beyond.’¹²³ However, she does acknowledge that some Biblical texts, in particular Gal. 3:28, ‘appear to assert such a distinct identity already around the middle of the first century.’ Lieu rejects this, though, noting that Paul references Abraham in the following verse, and that interpretation of this verse has varied greatly throughout history.¹²⁴ She proceeds to examine the boundaries of the Jewish and Christian community, ‘for it is boundaries that both enclose those who share what is common and exclude those who belong out-side,’¹²⁵ beginning with Jewish ethnic boundaries. We have already seen some of the features which she cites (Abrahamic descent, circumcision, food laws, Sabbath observance), but Lieu is not satisfied with these alone, stating that they ‘are still too often presented as the uncontested social and self-determining boundary markers of Judaism.’¹²⁶ Rather, for Lieu, ‘idolatry is pervasively the fixed point of the boundary and the primary hallmark of the Gentiles as ‘other’’¹²⁷ Thus, she believes that the primary way Jews identified ‘outsiders’ was through their religious beliefs, particularly their use of idols. As religion was key to

122. William S. Campbell, *Christian Identity*, 124.

123. Judith M. Lieu, “‘Impregnable Ramparts and Walls of Iron’: Boundary and Identity in Early ‘Judaism’ and ‘Christianity’,” *NTS* 48, no. 1 (2002): 312.

124. Judith M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 5–6.

125. Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 98.

126. Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 109.

127. Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 118.

identifying Jewish insiders, so it was with Jewish outsiders. Her approach to the Christ-following community is similar; the most fundamental boundary of the Christian community was ‘faith in Jesus Christ,’ thus labelling believers as insiders and unbelievers as outsiders.¹²⁸ Yet this is not enough for Lieu, who notes that ‘faith in Jesus Christ’ is a vague concept which invites various interpretations, as is clearly demonstrated in the writings of Paul, 1 John and Ignatius;¹²⁹ because of this, Lieu insists that ‘in many situations Jews and Christians behaved as if there were no rigid boundaries to separate them, *and* that ‘Jews’ and ‘Christians’ shared a common culture,’ and yet were ‘reciprocally exclusive’ from one another.¹³⁰ Though she herself has cited many instances of Christian identification through religious belief, Lieu concludes that ‘we shall not get at the heart of a ‘Christian’ identity by according it a privileged label, ‘religious.’¹³¹ However, I believe that Lieu has overlooked several elements of a Christ-following ‘culture,’ to use her term, that do indeed identify those ‘in Christ’ as something other than Jews. Though there are, of course, many parallels in the two communities, I believe that an examination of Paul’s letters will demonstrate the identifiable nature of the Christ-following identity group through these boundary markers.

In a similar vein to Lieu, Denise Kimber Buell has suggested that religious tradition is the key defining feature in the identity determination of Christians, though she, too, maintains that this religious distinction only emerges in the second century. She cites many examples of early Christian texts in which the authors ‘define their version of

128. Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 131.

129. Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 131.

130. Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 307.

131. Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 310.

Christianity as a race',¹³² several of which were cited in the opening pages of this examination. In Buell's opinion, in order to study Christian origins we must 'consider questions of race and ethnicity more thoroughly than we have,'¹³³ because 'while religion could demarcate the differences between peoples, it was also a means by which one could change one's race.'¹³⁴ Those works by Buell cited so far contributed to her 2005 publication *Why This New Race?: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*, in which Buell again states that it is religion more than any other feature which distinguishes the Christian community from other groups, beginning in the second century. However, she rejects the notion that culture and ethnicity may be distinguished from each other, instead stating that 'ethnicity/race is a possible (though not necessary) *feature of cultural identity*.'¹³⁵ This is a rather different view from that put forth by Barth in his influential studies, for whom cultural features are markers that indicate ethnic identity. We have seen in the works of several scholars the idea that culture is but one feature of ethnic identity. Here, Buell turns this on its head, though she reaches the same conclusion as many of the scholars we have examined already: religion is but one aspect of what distinguishes an ethnic group. However, Buell's own work shows the important role played by religion in distinguishing early Christians, beginning in the second century. She does address Paul on a number of occasions, but the earliest Christian text given proper consideration by Buell is 1 Peter; Paul is used more as a footnote than an actual source of information.

132. Denise Kimber Buell, "Rethinking the Relevance of Race for Early Christian Self-Definition," *HTR* 94, no. 4 (2001): 451.

133. Denise Kimber Buell, "Race and Universalism in Early Christianity," *J ECS* 10, no. 4 (2002): 474.

134. Buell, "Race and Universalism," 466.

135. Buell, *Why This New Race?* 45.

Buell, along with co-author Caroline Johnson Hodge, does directly address the issue of Christian identity in Paul's writings in their 2004 article, 'The Politics of Interpretation: The Rhetoric of Race and Ethnicity in Paul.'¹³⁶ They observe, as did Boyarin, that Paul is addressing the question of how the Gentiles fit into God's plan for the world, and that he uses 'ethnic reasoning' to accomplish this.¹³⁷ They also observe, as have many others, that Paul 'plays with [the] patrilineal ideology' of Judaism, reinterpreting Abraham in such a way as to include non-Jews in the family tree. Ultimately, Buell and Hodge conclude that Paul does not 'erase ethnic and cultural differences,' nor does he 'envision a new people...he certainly does not formulate the concept of Christians.'¹³⁸

Charles Cosgrove presents a similar idea, noting that Paul's uses of the term 'Jew' are 'conventional, reflecting an understanding of Jewish ethnicity as descent and practice,' that is, a combination of ancestry and custom, of Abraham and the law, as seen in both Cohen and Barclay. He notes that some have argued that Paul is redefining the term Jew to give it a 'spiritual sense that equates the truest or most faithful Jewish identity with being a Christian,' but Cosgrove maintains that any such redefinition 'is expressly not a notion of ethnic identity.'¹³⁹ He is building on the works of other scholars, notably Judith Gundry-Volf and Brad Braxton, who suggest that Paul is not attempting to erase ethnic distinctions in Gal. 3:28, and elsewhere, but is attempting instead to relativise them, to remove not the distinctions themselves, but the idea that

136. Denise Kimber Buell and Caroline Johnson Hodge, "The Politics of Interpretation: The Rhetoric of Race and Ethnicity in Paul," *JBL* 123, no. 2 (2004): 238.

137. Buell and Hodge, "Politics of Interpretation," 238.

138. Buell and Hodge, "Politics of Interpretation," 249.

139. Charles H. Cosgrove, "Did Paul Value Ethnicity?" *CBQ* 68, no. 2 (2006): 272.

one distinct group is dominant over any other.¹⁴⁰ Though Cosgrove cautions that we cannot be sure exactly of Paul's intention, he observes that Paul 'boasts of his Jewish identity...but goes on to label that identity as 'loss' and 'garbage,' and that there is no evidence that Paul 'was concerned to honour and protect specific ethnic identities of gentiles.'¹⁴¹ Thus, Cosgrove agrees with the conclusions of Gundry-Volf and Braxton, demonstrating that Paul is de-emphasising the value of these distinct groups, 'because of the superior value of knowing Christ.'¹⁴² However, whenever speaking of Paul's ethnicity, Cosgrove does so in terms of his Judaeon identity, agreeing with Buell and Hodge in their statement that 'it is a Judaeon umbrella under which he locates all those 'in Christ'.¹⁴³ Despite his recognition that Paul no longer values his Judaeon identity in favour of his superior knowledge of Christ, Cosgrove still insists on identifying Paul in terms of his previous life in Judaism, rather than his present life in Christ.

In his 2005 monograph, Atsuhiko Asano also engages with the question of Christian identity formation in the Galatian correspondence, and argues that Paul is attempting to establish a community identity in what is called "the instrumental mode", free from a core ethnic sentiment in constructing the community-identity.' In a vein similar to that of Cosgrove, and his predecessors Gundry-Volf and Braxton, Asano argues that Paul is de-emphasising the value of Jewish ethnic identity, because emphasising the value results in the 'marginalisation and subjugation of non-Jews in the

140. See Judith Gundry-Volf, "Christ and Gender: A Study of Difference and Equality in Gal. 3:28," in *Jesus Christus Als die Mitte der Schrift*, ed. Christof Landmesser (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997), 439–77, and Brad Braxton, *No Longer Slaves: Galatians and African American Experience* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), especially pg. 94.

141. Cosgrove, "Did Paul Value Ethnicity?" 281.

142. Cosgrove, "Did Paul Value Ethnicity?" 289.

143. Cosgrove, "Did Paul Value Ethnicity?" 283; cf. Buell and Hodge, "Politics of Interpretation," 249.

community.’¹⁴⁴ Following from this, Paul is constructing a community-identity in the Galatian church, and presumably in others of his congregations, that is ‘free from core ethnic sentiment or traditional issues important to the Jewish structure of religion.’¹⁴⁵ Paul is not concerned about preserving a ‘core ethnic sentiment,’ thus, he is able to reach out to people from various ethnic groups in the Mediterranean region. However, Asano’s assertion does not address the features which contribute to the creation and maintenance of these identities, and thus overlooks the role those features play in the formation of the Pauline communities.

Bernard Ukwuegbu, like Asano, also addresses Christian identity in Paul’s letter to the Galatians, and his approach bears many similarities to my own. Many of the authors surveyed in this chapter are addressed, also, by Ukwuegbu, and many similar conclusions are reached. However, there are some key differences in both research and conclusions between Ukwuegbu’s study and my own. Ukwuegbu focuses his study on Christianity, that is, Pauline Christianity as presented in his letter to the Galatians, as a breakaway ‘sect’ of its parent, Judaism,¹⁴⁶ one which reacted against many of the religious tenets of first-century Judaism, and thus represents elements of a distinct religion.¹⁴⁷ In his work, Ukwuegbu notes that ‘the early Jesus Movement both in

144. Atsuhiro Asano, *Community-Identity Construction in Galatians: Exegetical, Social-Anthropological and Socio-Historical Studies* (London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 30.

145. Asano, *Community-Identity Construction*, 81.

146. In his examination of the term ‘sect’ and the phenomenon of ‘sectarianism,’ Ukwuegbu relies on the scholarship of M. Weber, E. Troeltsch, F. Barth, B. Wilson, P. Esler, and J. Elliott, among others. Additionally, he examines the scholarship of several of these authors along with works by F. Watson, J. Dunn, E. Sanders, and N. Elliot, among others, as regards their efforts to examine the sectarian nature of the first-century Christian movement(s). I will address these authors and their works, as well, in subsequent chapters.

147. Bernard O. Ukwuegbu, *The Emergence of Christian Identity in Paul’s Letter to the Galatians: A Social-Scientific Investigation Into the Root Causes for the Parting of the Way Between Christianity and Judaism* (Bonn: Borengässer, 2003), 40, 66, 71, 85.

Jerusalem and in the Diaspora remained faithful to the key points of Jewish identity markers,¹⁴⁸ which he examines through the work of such prominent scholars as James D.G. Dunn and E.P. Sanders.¹⁴⁹ Ultimately, Ukwuegbu determines that Paul stood ‘at a point of still clear overlap between ‘Christianity’ and ‘Judaism’ where a crack between the two was just becoming visible.’¹⁵⁰ He maintains that the two were, essentially, still connected, despite his assertions that Paul was subverting traditional markers of Jewish identity with regards to the emerging Christian movement.¹⁵¹ However, this was not the beginning of a new, distinct identity group which could be identified as ‘Christian’. Rather, Paul’s Gospel was, for Ukwuegbu, ‘among the primary catalysts that led to the emergence of Christian identity out of the ashes of the conflicts in and with first-century Judaism’;¹⁵² this made Paul ‘more than anyone else...responsible for expanding that crack into a rift.’¹⁵³ That is, Paul’s efforts did create a Christian movement which was ‘sectarian’ in its relationship to Judaism, and a distinct Christian identity did not emerge until some time later, presumably in the second century CE.

However, I assert that Paul’s letters demonstrate a move away from several prominent Jewish identity markers, to such a degree that they do not fit the mould of a Jewish sect. Further, there are boundary markers, based on the list of Hutchinson and Smith, which are unique to the Christ-following movement, and which suggest that there

148. Cf. Ukwuegbu, *The Emergence of Christian Identity*, Chapter 3, particularly pg. 149.

149. Primarily: James D.G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1991) and E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE - 66 CE* (London: SCM Press, 1992).

150. Ukwuegbu, *The Emergence of Christian Identity*, 149.

151. Cf. Ukwuegbu, *The Emergence of Christian Identity*, 63–65, 69, 71, 85, 173–74, 237.

152. Ukwuegbu, *The Emergence of Christian Identity*, 2.

153. Ukwuegbu, *The Emergence of Christian Identity*, 149.

was an identifiable Christ-following identity which existed over and above any other identities to which converts had a claim.

Of particular interest to this examination is Love Sechrest's recent monograph *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race*. Sechrest describes the aim of her study as follows:

‘By developing models for ancient constructions of race and ethnicity and using them as a framework for examining Pauline thought on Christian identity, we will be able to describe Pauline Christianity as a nascent but distinctive ancient racial group that draws on a Jewish understanding of race in Second Temple Judaism.’¹⁵⁴

This statement, and Sechrest's study itself, shares much in common with my own examination of Christ-following identity in the letters of Paul. However, while there are many observations with which I agree, and which will advance certain points of my own study, there are aspects of her method and conclusion which I find troublesome.

Following an extensive (and impressive) survey of ancient Greek and Jewish texts, Sechrest concludes that γένος and ἔθνος, two of the ‘ethnic’ terms applied to the Christ-following communities of the first and second centuries, were often used interchangeably to refer to the same people-groups (or, in my terminology, identity groups). When this occurred, γένος emphasised aspects of kinship, while ἔθνος emphasised shared cultural elements of the group,¹⁵⁵ which she describes using the modern terms ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity,’ respectively.¹⁵⁶ Her examination determines, as does my own, that of central importance to the creation and maintenance of Jewish

154. Sechrest, *A Former Jew*, 5.

155. Sechrest, *A Former Jew*, 60. She notes that Smith, *Ethnic Origins*, 21 and Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 35, 38, among others, also observe this relationship.

156. These English terms are used throughout Sechrest's examination to refer to ancient understandings of γένος and ἔθνος.

identity in the ancient world was their religious traditions, which makes the Jewish identity group somewhat unique in antiquity.¹⁵⁷ Her examination then moves to the letters of the Pauline corpus, eventually concluding that

‘...in one sense Paul was both Jewish and Christian given that he was born Jewish and later chose to identify with Christ; but in another sense he was a former Jew, because he did not hold to both of those identities with equal loyalty when he considered the arc of his personal narrative....’¹⁵⁸

This leads Sechrest to highlight certain elements within Paul’s letters which she identifies as religious, which are comparable to the religious elements which she holds up as being central to Jewish identity in the first century, most notably πίστις Χριστοῦ and the role of the Spirit.¹⁵⁹ She also addresses Paul’s presentation of kinship in the Christian community as being determined by faith, rather than biology.¹⁶⁰ Eventually, Sechrest concludes that ‘the portrayal of Christian racial identity’ which she develops in her study ‘is that of an *emergent, newly formed, Jewish-like racial group* [original emphases].’¹⁶¹

As noted above, there are several elements of Sechrest’s work with which I agree. I too hold that religion played a key role in both Jewish and Christ-following identity formation and maintenance in antiquity, and I agree that faith was central to Paul’s concept of kinship within his congregations; I will address both of these points in subsequent chapters of this work. However, Sechrest’s insistence on using the term

157. Sechrest, *A Former Jew*, 104–05 notes that ‘this model of Jewish racial identity differs markedly from the corresponding non-Jewish concepts.’

158. Sechrest, *A Former Jew*, 159.

159. Sechrest, *A Former Jew*, 170–73.

160. Sechrest, *A Former Jew*, 123–43.

161. Sechrest, *A Former Jew*, 206.

‘race,’ and her ultimate description of Paul’s Christ-following communities as a ‘Jewish-like racial group’ crashes headlong into those issues raised at the beginning of this examination regarding this terminology. The term ‘race’ cannot help but carry with it a sense of shared biological kinship, something which the earliest Christ-followers, except in the case of existing familial relations, did not share. At best, the Christ-followers may be described as sharing a sense of fictive kinship, a concept which will be examined later in this study (see in particular Chapter 4), but Sechrest’s racial description of the early Christ-following movement precludes this important aspect of identity groups. This, coupled with her description of Paul in the work and the title as ‘a former Jew’ makes it clear that Sechrest seems intent on divorcing the nascent Christ-following communities from their Jewish parent body, on describing the former as being completely separate from the latter. That is not my own belief, nor is it the intention of this study to make such a claim. I believe, as will be shown in the following study, that Paul displays identity features of both the Jewish identity group and the nascent Christ-following group, that he existed within both groups simultaneously.

Dennis Duling seems to come to a conclusion similar to that reached by Sechrest. After offering a survey on the study of ethnicity, Duling seeks to identify features of a Christian *ethnos* in Paul’s writings, one which ‘was not specified as rooted in *genos* from Israel, the *phylē* of Benjamin, the Hebrew language and culture, the norms of Torah, and the rite of circumcision.’¹⁶² Rather, Duling argues that ‘Paul believed that he had entered another *ethnos*, which had its own boundaries, its own values, and its own symbols.’¹⁶³ I agree with this statement, to a point; I do believe that the Christ-following communities depicted in the Pauline epistles portrayed certain elements of ancient

162. Duling, “‘Whatever Gain I Had..,’” 614.

163. Duling, “‘Whatever Gain I Had..,’” 614.

identity groups, which allowed them to be identified as a group. However, Duling's statement that Paul 'believed he had entered another *ethnos*' once again strays into the zero-sum game described above, in much the same way that Sechrest's work does, implying a complete separation or departure from Judaism. This is in error. My own approach to the question of Christian identity in the letters of Paul will not attempt completely to separate Paul and his followers from contemporary Judaism, and will avoid the implication of doing so inherent in modern terms such as 'ethnic/ethnicity' and 'race/racial,' or in a claim that Paul had left one *ethnos* for another.

The Form of the Examination

In pursuit of an understanding of the boundary marking features which contributed to the later emergence of an 'ethnic' Christian community in the letters of Paul, we must first address the question of to what extent did the Pauline communities adhere to those boundary markers which existed around first century Jewish communities. Though we have already briefly explored this above, the following chapter will thoroughly explore the Jewish communities of the first century, the so-called Jewish 'sects,' in terms of the boundary markers which made them unique subgroups within Judaism, while still maintaining their identities as Jews. Following a brief discussion of the sources available to us regarding each of these groups, we will examine them for examples of the six criteria of group identity laid out above. However, given that Judaism in the first century CE was by no means uniform, we will also employ the works of James Dunn and E.P. Sanders to examine the Jewish sects in terms of what Sanders calls the 'pattern of common Judaism,' that is, those things which were common to all Jews, and which helped identify them as Jews. In addition to providing further insight into the boundary markers around these groups, it will also demonstrate the

presence and prominence of multiple identities within first century Judaism, a phenomenon which could be applied to the Pauline Christ-following communities as well.

Following this, we will turn our examination directly to the letters of the undisputed Pauline corpus, and explore his writings in terms of the same boundary markers identified around the Jewish communities of the first century CE. We will observe that Paul himself does still display some of the group identity boundary markers which existed around the Jewish identity group. However, it will be demonstrated that there are several elements in which the two communities do not overlap, particularly in terms of the 'pattern of common Judaism' that served to further identify members of Jewish sub-groups as still belonging to the Jewish identity group. This will establish space to pursue an examination of uniquely Christ-following boundary markers within the letters of Paul.

The final chapter of this work will operate within this space, and explore the presence of the six criteria of group identity within the undisputed corpus. It will be demonstrated that these letters, and presumably the Christ-following communities to whom they were written, exhibit some elements of each of the six criteria, as well as the positive self-image offered by these indicia to community members. Additionally, the unique nature of these group identity markers will be observed, highlighting the peculiarly Christian nature of even those markers adapted or adopted from Jewish identity markers. While it seems clear that many Christ-followers continued to exist within Judaism to some degree, I will argue that the Christ-following community was envisioned as being an identifiable community which existed in relation to the Jewish identity group, and yet was held to be of primary importance for members of dual identity.

CHAPTER 2

MULTIPLE IDENTITIES AND FIRST CENTURY JEWISH SECTARIANISM

Our examination moves now to the concept of multiple identities in the first century, specifically as regards the Jewish identity group. As seen above, modern scholarship has tended to address early Christian identity in terms of Jewish identity, placing the nascent Christ-following communities under the umbrella of Judaism, as a sub-group or sect. This is a valid observation; as noted, the first converts to what we now call Christianity were originally Jews, and the first and most prolific Christian writer, Paul, was himself a zealous member of the Jewish identity group prior to his Damascus road experience. The question we are faced with, then, is, following a conversion experience, did the early Christ-followers fully enter a new community? Did they maintain their Jewish identity in full? Or did they rather continue to display identifying features of the Jewish identity group, while simultaneously displaying new identifying features, boundary markers which existed around a new, emerging community?

To answer this question, we will examine the varied factions of the Jewish identity group which existed in the first century, to determine whether these groups displayed multiple layers of identity as both sectarian factions and Jews. This may seem an unnecessary step. After all, that I can speak of them in this introductory statement as ‘factions of the Jewish identity group’ suggests that they all participated in the Jewish identity group, typified in identifying features based in Jewish religious tradition. It is, to my knowledge, uncontested that these groups, at least the three largest groups of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes, were Jews. However, it must be noted that there were

many overarching religious practices and beliefs among the Israelites of the ancient world. There was no one ‘Judaism’ of which to speak, no ‘orthodoxy’ which may be said to be ‘the’ Judaism between the fourth century BCE and the first century CE.¹⁶⁴ Rather, there are many ‘Judaisms’ of which one may speak in this period. Christopher D. Stanley discusses Palestinian versus Diaspora Judaism, conceding that each ‘developed their own rather distinctive cultures over time’,¹⁶⁵ while Wayne A. Meeks suggests that Judaism was different between ‘villages’ and ‘provincial cities’ in Palestine and Diaspora.¹⁶⁶ We are also faced with the abundantly attested sects of Judaism, and their different approaches to their faith present in the first century CE: the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, the Qumran community,¹⁶⁷ and, as many have argued, the Christian movement.¹⁶⁸ Each of these Jewish sub-groups (or, in the case of the Christian movement, so-called sub-groups) held practices and beliefs which were unique to their own members. One may also place the Zealots, the Sicarii and the group which Josephus called the ‘Fourth Philosophy’ on this list. Each of these groups certainly emerged from

164. See Lester L. Grabbe, “Orthodoxy in First Century Judaism: What Are the Issues?” *JSJ* 8, no. 2 (1977): 149–53, and the Preface of Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs, eds., *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Cf. Martin Hengel and Roland Deines, “E. P. Sanders’ ‘Common Judaism’, Jesus, and the Pharisees. A Review Article,” *JTS* 46, no. 1 (1995): 53, who suggest speaking ‘not of diverse ‘Judaisms’....but of a ‘complex Judaism’ which formed a stable community....’

165. Stanley, “‘Neither Jew Nor Greek’,” 112–13.

166. Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 34.

167. There is much scholarship regarding the Essenes to the Qumran community, with most scholars today agreeing that the groups were related. See: Todd S. Beall, *Josephus’ Description of the Essenes Illustrated by the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Sanders, *Judaism*; Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1994); and, most recently, Eyal Regev, *Sectarianism in Qumran: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).

168. It must be noted that I am not attempting to locate the origins of these groups within the first century CE, with the obvious exception of the Christian movement. There is much evidence to place the origins of the Pharisees, Sadducees and the Essenes/Qumran community in the last centuries BCE.

(and in many cases operated within) the traditions of the Israelite community. Yet we shall see that each group was peculiar in their religious beliefs and/or practices, and each made some claim to the title of ‘the chosen people.’

We must examine the differences and similarities of the groups listed above, and determine just how they could each possess different and unique practices within and understandings of Judaism, and yet still all be regarded as members of the Jewish identity group. To put it more simply, what characteristics did each of these groups have in common that qualified them as Jews, despite their varied beliefs and practices? Before moving on to this question, however, we must pause to examine the term ‘sect’ and the concept of ‘sectarianism.’ Doing so will not only dispel many of the negative connotations that have grown up around this term, particularly in modern Christianity, but will also provide us with a useful definition of what a ‘sect’ is. Thus, we will be able to examine each of the groups above in terms of the nature of their ‘sectarianism,’ if such a term is applicable to them, and determine if each displayed aspects of possessing multiple identities.

The Nature of Sectarianism

The English word ‘sect’ is derived from the Latin *secta*, which is defined variously as ‘a path...manner, method, principles,’ and ‘doctrine, school, sect,’ though these latter suggestions are ‘not frequent until the post-Augustan period,’ that is, from the late first century BCE or early first century CE (Lewis and Short). *Secta* itself is the Latin word most commonly used to translate the Greek term αἵρεσις which is, in turn, often translated with the English word ‘sect,’ and from which is derived the English word ‘heresy,’ an example of the negative connotations that have become associated with the concept of sects. However, in its classical appearances, αἵρεσις is distinctly

lacking these negative associations. Though varied, the primary uses in ancient Greek writers were: A) ‘seizure,’ that is, the seizure of a city (e.g., Herodotus, *Histories*, IV.1), and; B) ‘choice,’¹⁶⁹ as in the election of magistrates (e.g., Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 8.89; see LSJ entry). It also carried the sense of ‘purpose, course of action or thought’ (e.g., Plato, *Phaedrus*, 256c; LSJ). It is natural, then, that this word would also become associated with the various philosophical ‘schools,’ or ‘sects,’ in the Greek and later Hellenistic and Roman worlds (as in Polybius, *Histories*, 5.93.8, and, later, the New Testament and early Christian writings; LSJ). The term is used to mean ‘school’ or ‘sect’ in both Philo and Josephus, though without any negative connotations; Philo uses it in reference to what he calls ‘the august philosophical society of the Therapeutics,’¹⁷⁰ while Josephus uses αἵρεσις to describe the Essenes, Sadducees and Pharisees, all of whom he equates with the Greek philosophical schools and whom he calls the ‘three schools of the Jews’ (*Ant.* 7.321; 13.171).¹⁷¹

The nine New Testament uses of αἵρεσις vary more widely, however. The Book of Acts corresponds ‘exactly to that of Josephus’,¹⁷² referring in three of six occurrences to one of the parties identified by Josephus as an αἵρεσις, the Pharisees (Acts 15:5; 26:5) and the Sadducees (Acts 5:17). In each of the remaining three Acts occurrences, αἵρεσις is applied to the Christ-following communities, twice by outsiders (Acts 24:5, in which

169. See Schlier’s article in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), vol. 1, 180–85.

170. *Vit. Cont.*, 29. Cf. Schlier, *TDNT*, vol. 1, 181.

171. Schlier points out that in later Rabbinic Judaism, αἵρεσις comes to translate the Hebrew יִרְמָה, which is used initially for schools or parties within Judaism, but comes to be used in reference to those groups opposed to the emerging Rabbinic orthodoxy; see Schlier, *TDNT*, vol. 1, 181–82, Volume 1.

172. Schlier, *TDNT*, vol. 1, 182. Baumbach, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, by special arrangement with Eerdmans, 1990), vol. 1, 40 agrees, noting that ‘In agreement with the usage of Josephus..., the meaning which emerges is *doctrine, school, or (religious) party* - without any negative connotation.’

Paul is accused of being a ringleader of τῆς τῶν Ναζαραίων αἰρέσεως; 28:22, in which the Jewish leaders gathered by Paul express their knowledge of the things said about τῆς αἰρέσεως ταύτης). The final instance, at 24:14, finds Paul himself using αἵρεσις to speak of the Christ-following community: ‘But this I admit to you, according to the Way, which they call a sect...’, ἣν λέγουσιν αἵρεσιν. Each of these instances also fits with the model found in the works of Josephus, in referring to a group within the tradition of Judaism, exemplified best at 24:5 and 28:22 wherein Jewish leaders, by referring to the Christ-followers as an αἵρεσις, make clear that they consider the Christ-followers to exist under the umbrella of Judaism. However, the single instance in which the term is placed in Paul’s mouth would suggest that the author’s Paul views the matter rather differently. His own term at this instance for the Christ-following movement is τὴν ὁδόν, ‘the Way,’ the label αἵρεσις, and thus an implied existence within Jewish boundary markers is attributed to Paul’s Jewish accusers at his trial.¹⁷³ While this does fit with the Josephan model, suggesting that the Jewish authorities viewed the Christ-followers as merely a sect of Judaism, it also suggests that the author did not view the Christ-following movement as a Jewish sect at the time of writing.¹⁷⁴

In the letters of Paul, αἵρεσις is used rather differently than it is in Acts. There are two occurrences of the term in the Pauline corpus, at Gal. 5:20 and 1 Cor. 1:19, but neither refers to either the established Jewish sects such as the Pharisees and Sadducees, nor to the Christ-following community as a sect itself. Rather, both instances find Paul

173. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 412–13 also notes that αἵρεσις represents an outsider understanding of the Christ-following movement, while, here, ὁδόν represents an insider understanding.

174. So Baumbach, *EDNT*, vol. 1, 40. Cf. Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 598, for whom ‘Paul disparages the term αἵρεσις..., [substituting] for it the preferred “Movement”...’; Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 199, for whom ‘The contemptuous designation αἵρεσις, “sect” ..., is corrected by the term ὁδός, “Way.”’

presenting ‘party spirit’ or ‘factions’ within the communities as decidedly negative things. However, these instances do not offer any insight as to whether or not Paul thought of the Christ-following communities as sects of Judaism. Rather, they inform us that he saw divisions within the Christ-following communities to be detrimental to the lives of those communities.¹⁷⁵

The final instance of αἵρεσις in the New Testament comes at 2 Peter 2:1, in speaking about the ‘destructive heresies,’ αἵρεσις ἀπωλείας, that will be introduced as false prophets. This seems to follow the Pauline usage of the term by referring to the intra-community divisions that could occur in the face of false teachings, and which would be detrimental to the Christ-following community. This, too, does not offer any clear insight to the author’s opinion on the Christ-following movement as a Jewish αἵρεσις.

Later Christian authors of the late first and second century CE perpetuated an understanding of αἵρεσις as being opposed to the ἐκκλησία,¹⁷⁶ which in turn led to the negative connotations associated with the modern conceptions of the term ‘sect,’ as developed in the early 20th century.

The most prevalent understanding of the term ‘sect’ comes to us from the sociological scholarship of Max Weber, and is furthered by the work of Ernst Troeltsch. Weber, writing in the early 20th century, was one of the first modern scholars to examine the concept of sects and sect formation, and he remains influential in the field. For Weber, the defining feature of a sect was that of a religious community founded on

175. Baumbach, *EDNT*, vol. 1, 40 states: ‘For Paul...the Church is no Jewish αἵρεσις; ...he uses the word twice in an emphatically derogatory manner: in 1 Cor 11:18f. parallel to σχίσματα to mean *dissensions, division* and in Gal 5:20 in a vice list.’ However, while these observations are true, as noted in my own study, they are incorrectly identified as speaking to Paul’s thoughts regarding the Church as a Jewish αἵρεσις.

176. Schlier, *TDNT*, vol. 1, 182–84.

voluntary membership achieved through qualification.¹⁷⁷ His contributions to this field of study were vast, ranging from studies of early modern Christian sects to those of the ancient Israelites; Weber's publications on this topic are extensive.¹⁷⁸ But while Weber 'introduced the question of sects...he in fact made little use of the model in his work.'¹⁷⁹ It was the work of Troeltsch that furthered the discussion of what to call such groups, and which has subsequently promulgated the negative associations the term 'sect' now carries. In the 1931 translation of his *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*, Troeltsch puts forth his famous and influential 'church/sect' dichotomy, wherein a 'sect' is defined over and against an orthodox 'church;' that is, the 'church' represents the 'correct' and 'accepted' religious practices or traditions, while the 'sect' represents the opposite.¹⁸⁰ This, of course, gives rise to the idea that a 'sect' is a negative thing, an idea that is prevalent still today. However, while there is much to be gained from the work of Weber and Troeltsch, both wrote their most influential pieces prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. Thus, both Weber and Troeltsch offer several key observations from which to begin an examination of sectarianism in the ancient world, and yet each is only able to offer a part of the picture.¹⁸¹ Scholarship in

177. See Max Weber, *Die protestantische Ethik und der 'Geist' des Kapitalismus*, 2nd, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: Allen & Unwin, 1904).

178. David Chalcraft provides an excellent bibliography of Weber's works. See David J. Chalcraft, ed., *Sectarianism in Early Judaism: Sociological Advances* (London: Equinox, 2007), 109–10.

179. Lester L. Grabbe, "When is a Sect a Sect - Or Not? Groups and Movements in the Second Temple Period," in *Sectarianism in Early Judaism: Sociological Advances*, ed. David J. Chalcraft (London: Equinox, 2007), 124.

180. Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches Volume I*, 1992 Reprint, trans. Olive Wyon (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1931).

181. This is not to say that the theories put forth by Troeltsch and Weber cannot be applied to the study of sectarianism today, in light of the Dead Sea Scrolls material. David J. Chalcraft examines Weber's treatment of sects (David J. Chalcraft, "The Development of Weber's Sociology of Sects: Encouraging a New Fascination," in *Sectarianism in Early Judaism: Sociological Advances*, ed. David J. Chalcraft [London: Equinox, 2007], 26–51), particularly in 1952's *Ancient Judaism* (David J. Chalcraft,

this area since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls offers a much more thorough examination of Jewish sectarianism in the first century.

The extensive work of sociologist Bryan Wilson may offer the best starting point in searching for a definition of ‘sect’ that is not based primarily on the ‘church/sect’ dichotomy of Troeltsch.¹⁸² One of Wilson’s key criteria in defining (or at least in identifying) a sect was separation: membership in the sect and membership in outside society (or even in another sect) is not permitted.¹⁸³ Building on this foundation, Wilson initially sought to distinguish different types of sects based upon their ‘mission,’¹⁸⁴ though, as Lester L. Grabbe points out, this approach ‘was capable of misunderstanding’ because it could imply active recruitment on the part of the sect.¹⁸⁵ Wilson’s final development listed seven types of sects, identifiable based on their ‘response to the world,’ rather than their organisation or doctrine.¹⁸⁶ These are: conversionist (that is, God will change human beings); revolutionist (God will overthrow the present world);

“Weber’s Treatment of Sects in *Ancient Judaism*: The Pharisees and the Essenes,” in *Sectarianism in Early Judaism: Sociological Advances*, ed. David J. Chalcraft [London: Equinox, 2007], 52–73), and proceeds to develop this into a Weberian examination of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

182. Wilson states several times that the term ‘sect’ should be used free of the negative connotations often associated with it (Bryan R. Wilson, *Religious Sects: A Sociological Study* [London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970], 13; Bryan R. Wilson, *Magic and the Millenium: A Sociological Study of Religious Movements of Protest Among Tribal and Third-World Peoples* [London: Heinemann, 1973], 17–18), and that ‘sect’ does not necessarily imply a corresponding and opposite ‘church,’ as in Troeltsch, but would be better understood as a ‘minority religious movement’ (Bryan R. Wilson, *Religious Sects*, 24–26; Bryan R. Wilson, *Magic and the Millenium*, 34).

183. Bryan R. Wilson, “An Analysis of Sect Development,” *ASR* 24 (1959): 4; Bryan R. Wilson, ed., *Patterns of Sectarianism: Organisation and Ideology in Social and Religious Movements* (London: Heinemann, 1967), 24; Bryan R. Wilson, *Magic and the Millenium*, 32–33.

184. Bryan R. Wilson, *Patterns of Sectarianism*, 25–26.

185. Lester L. Grabbe, “When is a Sect a Sect - Or Not? Groups and Movements in the Second Temple Period,” in *Sectarianism in Early Judaism: Sociological Advances*, ed. David J. Chalcraft (London: Equinox, 2007), 125.

186. Definitions of sect, Wilson says, based on organisation and/or doctrine are ‘defective,’ particularly outside of the Christian context. 1973, 14–16; cf. Grabbe, “When is a Sect a Sect,” 125.

introversionist (the sect must withdraw from the present world); manipulationist (the sect must develop the correct means of living in the present world); thaumaturgical (the sect must call on divine or magical powers); reformist (the sect must seek to reform the world with God's help); and utopian (the sect must seek to completely change society with God's help).¹⁸⁷ A sect may, of course, exhibit elements of any or all of these simultaneously, and a decade later, Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge offer their own description of a sect which encompasses many of the ideas highlighted by Wilson.

In 1985, Stark and Bainbridge defined a sect as 'a religious group' which was in a 'state of tension' with the surrounding society, resulting from the sect's rejection of society at large and vice versa, and the sect's subsequent development as a sub-culture.¹⁸⁸ They examined this sub-cultural tension further by identifying three markers which are indicative of it: *antagonism* (sectarians distrust society-at-large, and believe in the exclusive legitimacy of their group); *separation* (sectarians establish and maintain ritual, social, and/or geographical isolation from society-at-large; note that Wilson also observed the importance of separation in sect formation¹⁸⁹); and *difference* (sectarians adopt standards which are distinct from society-at-large, and reject those standards held by society-at-large). They conclude by determining that sects form because they are unhappy with the world, and thus reject aspects of it with which they are most

187. Bryan R. Wilson, *Magic and the Millenium*, 18–28; cf. Grabbe, "When is a Sect a Sect," 126 and Regev, *Sectarianism in Qumran*, 42–43.

188. Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 23, 49. Cf. Benton Johnson, "On Church and Sect," *ASR* 28 (1963): 542, 544 and R.R. Dynes, "Church-Sect Typology and Socio-Economic Status," *ASR* 20 (1955): 555.

189. Bryan R. Wilson, "An Analysis of Sect Development," 4.

dissatisfied (antagonism); they then withdraw from the world (separation), and establish a new order in which to live in and approach the world (difference).¹⁹⁰

Albert I. Baumgarten offers a similar conclusion in his examination of sects in the Maccabean era. He, too, observes the negative connotations that the ‘church/sect’ dichotomy has created, particularly in the west, where ‘sects promote divisiveness, while larger movements such as churches are devoted to the integration of their members in the social order.’¹⁹¹ Thus scholars, in speaking of sects, tend to indicate that ‘there was some sense in which these movements *cut themselves off* from the larger institutions of society’. Baumgarten is careful to point out that, if this is true, then ‘every small religious movement is not a sect: some measure of deliberate self definition over against others is required.’¹⁹² With this in mind, Baumgarten suggests a definition of a sect as

‘a voluntary association of protest, which utilizes boundary marking mechanisms - the social means of differentiating between insiders and outsiders - to distinguish between its own members and those otherwise normally regarded as belonging to the same national or religious entity.’¹⁹³

This is done, according to Baumgarten, primarily through restrictions placed on sect members in ‘a number of realms of life: food, dress, marriage, commerce and worship.’¹⁹⁴ We see here the same three markers of sub-cultural tension presented by

190. Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, 49–60.

191. Albert I. Baumgarten, *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 5.

192. Baumgarten, *Flourishing of Jewish Sects*, 5.

193. Baumgarten, *Flourishing of Jewish Sects*, 7.

194. Baumgarten, *Flourishing of Jewish Sects*, 91 examines each of these elements as represented in ancient literature (for example, from Josephus and Philo) for the Pharisees, Essenes, and the Dead Sea Sect, though he is not able to examine each element for each group; there is simply not enough evidence to allow such an examination.

Stark and Bainbridge, antagonism (a voluntary association *of protest*), separation (which utilises boundary marking mechanisms), and difference (to distinguish between its own members and those...regarded as belonging to the same national or religious entity). It seems clear, then, that these three elements are key to any definition of ‘sect.’ Philip Davies and Joseph Blenkinsopp, though not offering specific definitions, also highlight these features in their approach to examining sects and sectarianism.¹⁹⁵ It must also be noted that Baumgarten returns emphasis to an often overlooked or unremarked upon criteria in his definition of sect, that of its ‘voluntary’ nature; members are not forced to join the sect (as may be observed during the various Crusades), nor are they admitted to the sect for arbitrary reasons, such as birth (which would determine one’s membership in national identities, such as ‘Egyptian’, and some religious identities, such as Judaism).¹⁹⁶ For the purposes of the rest of this examination, I will be adopting Baumgarten’s definition of a sect. This encompasses not only the three markers of sub-cultural tension laid out by Stark and Bainbridge, and present in nearly every definition of ‘sect,’ but also emphasises the crucial element of the voluntary nature of sect membership. For this reason, Baumgarten’s is both the most accurate definition, and the most encompassing in terms of which groups may be understood as sects. This definition also allows for an examination of the Pauline Christ-following movement in terms of another social phenomenon of the ancient world, the Greco-Roman voluntary associations. There is extensive scholarship on the nature of voluntary associations in the Greco-Roman world,

195. See Philip R. Davies, “Sect Formation in Early Judaism,” in *Sectarianism in Early Judaism: Sociological Advances*, ed. David J. Chalcraft (London: Equinox, 2007), 135 and Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Interpretation and the Tendency to Sectarianism: An Aspect of Second Temple History,” in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition Volume Two: Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period*, ed. E.P. Sanders, A.I. Baumgarten, and Alan Mendelson (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1981), 1–2.

196. Cf. Albert I. Baumgarten, “Josephus on Ancient Jewish Groups from a Social Scientific Perspective,” in *Studies in Josephus and the Varieties of Ancient Judaism: Louis H. Feldman Jubilee Volume*, ed. Shaye J. D. Cohen and Joshua Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 3–4.

much of it pertaining specifically to the question of whether the nascent Christ-following movement can be best understood as such an organisation, that is, best understood not as a Jewish sect, but as a Greco-Roman social organisation. This comparison reveals many interesting similarities, and I will return to this topic in the next chapter.

Though I will adhere primarily to the definition of sect provided by Baumgarten above, I will at times refer back to the seven types of sects laid out by Wilson, in order to most succinctly describe the various sects present in Judaism in the first century CE. It is also worth noting that, as Baumgarten states, the absence of an ‘orthodoxy’ does not preclude the formation of sects within a religious tradition; there does not need to be a ‘church’ for a ‘sect’ to form against.¹⁹⁷ Rather, it seems clear that the lack of orthodoxy may have contributed to the large number of sects within first century Judaism. Without an overarching sense of what is ‘right,’ various people will reach various conclusions as to right and wrong, and give rise to a diverse group of sectarians.

I must address one final point before moving on to my treatment of the various sub-groups of Judaism in the first century. At the beginning of this chapter, I laid out my intention to examine these groups in order to determine what allowed each of these groups to be a unique sub-group, with unique practices and beliefs, and yet still also be considered members of the Jewish identity group. This begs the question, then, as to how this determination will be made: by what criteria can one determine the Jewishness (or non-Jewishness) of a group in the first century CE? In the previous chapter, I highlighted several boundary markers which existed around the Jewish identity group, and which served to identify members of that group as ‘Jews.’ These were drawn from the list of group identity features provided by Hutchinson and Smith, and included a

197. Cf. Albert I. Baumgarten, “Ancient Jewish Sectarianism,” *Judaism* 47, no. 185 (1998): 388; Baumgarten, “Ancient Jewish Groups,” 6.

common name (Jews or Israelites), a sense of fictive kinship and common origins (Abraham and his offspring), shared historical memories (Moses and the giving of the Law, the Flood, et al.), elements of common culture (religious traditions), a link with a homeland (Judaea), and a sense of solidarity on the part of group members. Each of these, the astute reader will recall, were drawn from the religious traditions of the Israelites. However, as will be seen in the following pages, each of the Jewish ‘sects’ which existed in the first century¹⁹⁸ exhibits elements of these distinctly ‘Jewish’ boundary markers, as well as boundary markers which are unique to each group which are not drawn directly from Israelite religious traditions; these will be highlighted in the following discussion. If our examination were to end here, the matter would be left more confused than it already is. We would be left with the question: how can these sub-groups, which exhibited their own unique boundary markers, be accurately described as Jewish?

To address this, I turn to the scholarship of E.P. Sanders and James Dunn, each of whom provides a solution to this issue. Sanders describes a pattern of what he calls ‘common Judaism,’ that is, certain elements of Jewish religious tradition which were common to all members of the Jewish identity group, a topic which appears in many of Sanders’ works. Bernard Ukwuegbu summarises this pattern:

‘(1) God has chosen Israel and (2) given the law. The law implies both (3) God’s promise to maintain the election and (4) the requirement to obey. (5) God’s rewards [sic] obedience and punishes transgression. (6) The law provides for means of atonement, and atonement results in (7) maintenance or re-establishment of the covenantal relationship. (8) All those who are maintained in the covenant by obedience, atonement and God’s mercy belong to the group which will be saved....’¹⁹⁹

198. That is to say, which existed in the first century, and of which we have some historical records. I do not presume to imply that the handful of groups which I will examine were by any means the only groups which existed within Judaism during the first century.

199. Ukwuegbu, *The Emergence of Christian Identity*, 112. See Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 422 and Sanders, *Judaism*, 262–78 for Sanders’ own treatment of this topic. Though the idea of a

Dunn offers a similar presentation of those elements which all members of the Jewish identity group would share in common, presented as the four pillars of Judaism. In his *The Partings of the Ways*, Dunn describes these pillars as being the ‘axiomatic convictions round which the more diverse interpretations and practices of the different groups within Judaism revolved.’²⁰⁰ These four pillars are: monotheism; election; covenant focused in Torah; and land focused in Temple.²⁰¹ As described by Dunn, the four pillars of Judaism overlap with several elements of Sanders’ pattern of common Judaism. Sanders and Dunn both highlight Israel’s sense of election, their view of their own place as the chosen people,²⁰² as a feature essential to Jewish identity,²⁰³ and one which every person within that identity would have in common. Further, both point to Torah as a focal point of this election, as the covenant through which Israel’s election is made known to outsiders and to God; the ‘centrality of the Torah’ was ‘absolutely critical for any understanding of second Temple Judaism’, or Jewish identity. One may even observe monotheism²⁰⁴ as a feature in both lists of Jewish identity essentials,

‘common Judaism’ has become widely accepted in scholarship, Sanders is not without his critics, notably Hengel and Deines, “Common Judaism,” 68, who ultimately conclude that ‘Sanders’ presentation of Judaism describes it only as it looked from the outside’, and their examination, particularly pp. 51-67 and bibliography, presents some criticisms of this work.

200. James D.G. Dunn, *Partings of the Ways*, 35.

201. James D.G. Dunn, *Partings of the Ways*, 19–35.

202. Sanders, *Judaism*, 263: ‘God...chose Israel especially and gave them the law.’; James D.G. Dunn, *Partings of the Ways*, 21: ‘[Israel] had been specially chosen by Yahweh, that the one God had bound himself to Israel and Israel to himself by a...covenant.’

203. James D.G. Dunn, *Partings of the Ways*, 23. Cf. Sanders, *Judaism*, 267: ‘That God gave the law and that Jews were to obey it is implied by the entirety of the ancient literature....’

204. It is important to note that this is not necessarily the belief that there is only one God; rather it is the belief that, though there may be many gods, only the one God of Israel is deserving of worship. This belief was held by Jews throughout the Mediterranean at the turn of the era, and led to the Roman belief that Jews were atheists (cf. Josephus, *Against Apion* 2:148).

explicitly in Dunn's four pillars, and implicitly in the primacy of the one God of Israel throughout Sanders' pattern.

There are, however, several features which are unique to one list or the other here. For example, one may note that Sanders emphasises the 'requirement to obey' Torah, as well as his emphasis on the role of Torah in atonement and salvation. These features are absent from Dunn's list, though it may be argued that these are inalienable qualities of Torah observance, and that they therefore fall within Dunn's Torah category. Similarly, Dunn's fourth pillar, the land focused in Temple, is absent from Sanders' pattern. Dunn sees the Temple as being 'at the centre of Israel's national and religious life at that time.'²⁰⁵ However, despite the differences between them, Sanders' pattern of common Judaism and Dunn's four pillars provide us with the means to examine the Jewish sects of the first century CE not only in terms of their unique sub-group boundary markers, but in terms of their place within unquestionably Jewish boundary markers as well. Our discussion will proceed through an examination of first century Jewish 'sects' in order to determine whether these groups did or did not exist within the boundary markers of the Jewish identity group. The purpose of such an examination is to demonstrate what allowed members of these various Jewish 'sects,' each with their own unique traditions and approaches to Judaism, to maintain their identities as Jews.

The Question of Sources

Our examination of first century Jewish sects will focus primarily on the three best-attested groups, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes/Qumran community. However, despite the relatively well-known nature of these three groups, the ancient sources which offer evidence of their existence and practices are relatively few. The

205. James D.G. Dunn, *Partings of the Ways*, 31.

Pharisees and Sadducees are perhaps most famous for their roles in the Gospels of the New Testament, and both groups are mentioned in later rabbinic texts, as well. The Essenes, however, are absent from the New Testament, and are first mentioned in the works of Philo of Alexandria, a first century Jewish author, and in the letters of Pliny the Elder, though neither Philo nor Pliny discuss either the Pharisees or the Sadducees. Each of these three groups, however, are discussed by the first century Jewish historian Josephus, who discusses the three Jewish sects at greater length than any of our other sources. Additionally, Josephus makes mention of several other Jewish groups which may also be considered sects, the Zealots, the Sicarii, and the possible followers of a desert ascetic named Bannus. Between the New Testament, later rabbinic literature, and the first century evidence of Philo, Pliny and Josephus, it would seem that we could easily paint a portrait of each of these groups, certainly of the three which are attested in multiple sources. However, before doing so, we must consider the problems presented by each source.

The New Testament

While the New Testament may represent the most well known evidence for first century Jewish sects, this body of literature is highly problematic regarding these groups. On the one hand, there are relatively few references to either the Pharisees or Sadducees. The Pharisees are first mentioned in Phil. 3:5, as Paul states that he is ‘according to the Law a Pharisee’, which is the first and only reference to either the Pharisees or the Sadducees outside the Gospels and Acts. The Pharisees are next mentioned in the Gospel of Mark, which also features the earliest mention of the Sadducees in the New Testament corpus.²⁰⁶ In all, the Pharisees are mentioned nearly

206. So John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus: Volume III: Companions and Competitors* (London: Doubleday, 1991), 300. Cf. Günter Stemberger, *Jewish*

100 times in the entirety of the New Testament,²⁰⁷ and the Sadducees only 14 times. While this may seem like a high number of occurrences for the Pharisees, when compared with the length of the New Testament, they receive relatively little attention, while the Sadducees receive almost none.

To compound this problem, most of the New Testament references to the Pharisees and Sadducees present them in a decidedly negative light, as opponents of Jesus (cf. Matt 3:7; 12:24; Mark 3:6; 8:11; Luke 6:7; 11:53-54; John 11:57; 18:3). Given this, the authors of the New Testament can hardly be said to be unbiased with regard to the Jewish sects, and therefore their witness of the groups must be taken with a proverbial grain of salt.

The Rabbinic Literature

Several texts which emerged following the destruction of the second Temple in 70 CE also make mention of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. These texts represent part of the rabbinic tradition which survived following the Jewish revolt, and which formed the foundation for modern Judaism. However, as Meier notes, ‘the earliest rabbinic collection, the Mishna, was compiled almost 200 years after the time of Jesus’;²⁰⁸ this vast temporal disconnect hardly makes these the most reliable sources of information for the Jewish sects. Further, though reference is made to the pre-70 Pharisees and

Contemporaries of Jesus: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Allan W. Mahnke (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 7.

207. Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 360 n. 61 notes that ‘The exact number of occurrences of *Pharisaïos* in the NT is uncertain because of alternate readings in some texts; one count lists 97 occurrences in all.... Alternate readings could bring the total count up to 99.’ My own BibleWorks search returned 98 occurrences of the term in the New Testament. However, it is not the intent of this examination to shed light on this particular issue, but to highlight the relative rarity that the Pharisees are mentioned in the New Testament texts.

208. Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 305.

Sadducees, such references are few. What information we are able to glean from these few brief passages also reveals something of a bias on the part of the authors of the rabbinic literature, siding with the Pharisees whenever a Pharisaic/Sadducean dispute is described; specific examples will be examined below.

We are left, then, in a similar position regarding the rabbinic literature as a source for information on the Jewish sects of the first century as with the New Testament literature, that is to say, it can provide insight, but must be approached cautiously, while keeping in mind the distance and potential bias of the authors.

Josephus

The works of the first century Jewish historian Josephus provide us with the most information on the Jewish sects of the first century CE, and several others; in addition to the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, Josephus offers some information on the Zealots, the Sicarii, what he calls the ‘Fourth Philosophy’ and a desert ascetic named Bannus, who presumably had a group of followers. However, despite the wealth of information (at least, when compared with our other sources) about these groups, Josephus is, in many ways, the most problematic of the sources.

Foremost among these problems is the scarcity of mention the various sects receive in the various works of Josephus. Despite providing the most information on these groups, ‘his systematic treatments of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes are limited to three blocks of material isolated within the vast expanse of his writings’,²⁰⁹ and his mentions of the other, smaller groups mentioned above are even briefer. Then

209. Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 301. Meier goes on to state that, regarding the Pharisees, ‘Josephus restricts mention of them to fourteen different passages, of which only nine provide some deliberate, reflective discussion of their beliefs or activities. Cf. Steve Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees: A Composition-Critical Study* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 43, and n. 8.

there is the question of what Josephus actually says in his excurses on the Jewish sects, beginning with his claim to have spent a year studying with each group in order to determine which was the best (*Life* 2.9-12), beginning at the age of 16. This claim has aroused the curiosity of many scholars,²¹⁰ primarily in light of Josephus' subsequent claim that he completed his survey of the Jewish sects and began his public career at the age of 19.²¹¹ However, this three year period of Josephus' exploration of Jewish sects does not add up when one takes into account the three years that Josephus claims to have spent as a devoted disciple of the desert ascetic Bannus. If he had truly spent enough time with the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes to know first hand their varied philosophies, in addition to three years in the wilderness with Bannus, then his entire quest could not have lasted from the age of 16 until the age of 19, when he left Bannus and returned to the city.

In addition to this mathematical discrepancy, one must consider the content of Josephus' presentations of the various groups. Specific examples will be reserved for the group-specific discussions below, but some general observations may be made at this point in our examination. For example, Josephus' treatment of the Essenes is 'unfailingly laudatory.'²¹² Tessa Rajak notes that 'Josephus describes the Essenes at far greater length than he does the Pharisaic and Sadducean 'philosophies, and he also puts

210. Cf. Baumgarten, "Ancient Jewish Groups," 1; Shaye J.D. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development as a Historian* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), 106–07; Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 303–05, et al.

211. While the translation of ἡρξάμην τε πολιτεύεσθαι τῇ Φαρισαίων αἵρέσει is generally presented as 'I began to conduct myself according to the rules of the sect of the Pharisees', Steve N. Mason, "Was Josephus a Pharisee? A Re-Examination of *Life* 10–12," *JJS* 40, no. 1 (1989): 31–45 and *Josephus on the Pharisees*, 347–351 asserts that Josephus returned to the city following his desert excursion and 'began to engage in public affairs.' Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 362–63, n. 74 agrees with this interpretation.

212. Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 301.

them before the others',²¹³ further stressing the favourable attitude toward this particular group which Josephus seems to have had. By contrast, his presentation of the Sadducees is 'almost always negative',²¹⁴ while his statements regarding the Pharisees make it seem at one point as if he is 'thoroughly anti-Pharisaic',²¹⁵ while at another point we are to believe that Josephus has been a Pharisee since the age of 19 (*Life* 2.12). The bias exhibited in his statements, together with seemingly contradictory statements made by Josephus do nothing but raise concerns about the reliability of his witness regarding these groups.

These are but a few of the issues one could raise when discussing the problematic nature of Josephus' witness regarding the Jewish sects of the first century CE. However, such issues should not move us to abandon completely the works of Josephus, for they do provide us with valuable information. The issues above have been highlighted to demonstrate the need for caution when approaching these works, as was demonstrated with both the New Testament and rabbinic literature above. Moving forward, then, we will rely on the method adopted by J. P. Meier in his examination of the Jewish sects in relation to Jesus. In *A Marginal Jew* vol. III, Meier observes:

'As far as we know, there is no literary dependence connecting Paul, Q, Mark, John, the special sources of Matthew and Luke, Josephus, and the Mishna. Therefore, agreement on specific points about [the Jewish sects] on the part of such different authors with such different biases, living and

213. Tessa Rajak, "Ciò Che Flavio Giuseppe Vide: Josephus and the Essenes," in *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period*, ed. Fausto Parente and Joseph Sievers (New York: Brill, 1994), 146.

214. Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 301. Cf. Jonathan Klawans, "Sadducees, Zakokites [Sic], and the Wisdom of Ben Sira," in *Israel's God and Rebecca's Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. David B. Capes, April D. DeConick, Helen K. Bond, and Troy A. Miller (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 261: 'Josephus' descriptions of Sadducean doctrines are largely negative....'

215. This is Meier's (*Marginal Jew III*, 301, 361 n. 67) characterization of the view defended by Steve Mason, *Josephus on the Pharisees*, particularly at p. 373.

writing in so many different times and places, argues well for historicity.²¹⁶

This, then, will be the foundation of my own approach to the study of these groups; while singularly attested information will be considered where necessary (as with the Zealots, the Sicarii and Bannus) pride of place will be given to evidence attested to by more than one of the sources which discuss the various Jewish groups. Our discussion will begin with the Pharisees, and proceed in turn through the Sadducees and the Essenes/Qumran community, exploring each in terms of the elements of common Judaism discussed above to determine how these groups demonstrate an identifiably 'Jewish' identity in addition to their sectarian identities. We will then move on to examine those groups identified only in the works of Josephus and attempt as best we may to make a similar identification for each of them.

The Pharisees

The Pharisees are perhaps the most well known of the three Jewish sects mentioned in the sources discussed briefly above, and yet what we can safely claim to 'know' about them leaves much to be desired. However, keeping in mind our method of examination, that is, the relative reliability of multiple attestations, we can make several observations about this Jewish sub-group.

Though it may appear to go without question, the fact that a group called the Pharisees existed in Palestine at the turn of the era, and that this group was seen as belonging to the Jewish identity, is perhaps the most reliable piece of information which survives about them, and we find evidence for this in all of the sources which speak about the Pharisees. The earliest mention of them comes in Paul's letter to the

216. Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 310.

Philippians; Paul states that he is κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος, ‘a Pharisee according to the Law.’ A group called the Pharisees appears throughout the Gospels and at several places within Acts, as well, providing further evidence of the existence of such a group from the New Testament literature.

Josephus also provides evidence for the existence of a group called the Pharisees, and it is within his works that we find the group identified as one of the αἱρέσεις, ‘sects,’ of the Jews (Ant. 13.171; *Life* 1.10; cf. *War* 2.119-120, where Josephus identifies the Pharisees as one of the φιλοσοφεῖται, ‘philosophical schools’ of the Jews).

Similarly, one may identify several passages which mention a group called פרושים (or, variously, פרושין) in later rabbinic literature. This, however, reveals another problem within this source; it is not always clear if the group in question, the פרושימ/ן, is, in fact, the group we would identify as the Pharisees. Meier notes that the Hebrew, from the verb פרש, translates literally as ‘the separated ones,’ a meaning which is commonly ascribed to the Pharisees.²¹⁷ However, ‘in various rabbinic contexts, the word seems to refer to excessively pious people, extreme ascetics, sectarians who have separated themselves from the mainstream of Judaism, or even “heretics”’;²¹⁸ it need not necessarily be understood as referring to the group which we know as the Pharisees.

However, there are instances where ‘Pharisees’ seems the most likely translation, namely those instances in the rabbinic literature where legal disputes between the פרושים and another group, called the צדוקים, are discussed. As Meier notes, ‘the only antithetical groups that could be reasonably identified with the disputants in these texts are the

217. Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 306. He also offers an extensive bibliography regarding the name ‘Pharisee’, and notes that some scholars ‘prefer another meaning of *prš*, “to explain,” “to interpret” (i.e., the Scriptures)...’; 366, n. 83.

218. Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 306. Cf. Stemmerger, *Contemporaries*, 41–46 for an examination of such instances.

Pharisees and the Sadducees' (cf. *m. Yad.* 4:6-8; *t. Hag.* 3:35).²¹⁹ So it is clear that we may safely speak of the existence of a group known as the Pharisees during the first half of the first century CE.

Though identified as one of the three Jewish sects, the Pharisees are unique in Josephus' works in several ways. Foremost among their distinguishing features is their view of the keeping of the Law: the Pharisees 'seem to interpret the laws more accurately' (*War* 1:110), and 'are esteemed most skillful in the exact explanation of their laws' (*War* 2:162).²²⁰ This sentiment is echoed in one of the many New Testament appearances of the Pharisees, wherein a Pharisee named Gamaliel is identified as 'a teacher of the law, held in honour by all the people' (Acts 5:34), and later, when some of 'the Pharisees rose up, and said 'It is necessary to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses'' (Acts 15:5).

In addition to their apparent skill in interpreting the Torah, Josephus notes that the Pharisees 'have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the laws of Moses' (*Ant.* 13:297), thereby placing an emphasis on keeping traditions of their ancestors which are not found in Scripture. And though the New Testament literature is not so straightforward as Josephus, we find evidence of the Pharisaic emphasis on ancestral tradition here, as well. At Gal. 1:13-14, Paul notes that, during his persecutory activities against the nascent Christ-following community, he 'advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων, the traditions of my

219. Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 314.

220. It has been suggested that Josephus was careful to stress that the Pharisees 'enjoyed a reputation...for exact knowledge of the Mosaic Law and ancestral customs', not that they necessarily were 'so punctilious and exacting when it came to acting legally or morally': Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 314; cf. Steve Mason, *Josephus on the Pharisees*, 106-13.

ancestors.’ This phrase could be taken to refer to the Torah itself. However, it is equally possible that here Paul refers not to the Torah itself, but to the ancestral traditions which were not part of Torah, but which were passed down and esteemed by members of the Pharisees, among whom Paul counted himself at one point in his life.²²¹

What exactly these ancestral traditions addressed is largely a mystery. Yet two of our sources do address the content of some of these traditions, rather than merely attest to their existence. In the New Testament, we find Pharisaic traditions concerning the purity and impurity of various items, or the transmission of impurity through some medium: concerning food, liquid and containing vessels at Mark 7:1-23 and Matt 23:35-36; concerning tombs and dead bodies at Matt 23:37-38; and concerning the purity of Temple features at Matt 23:16-22. In all of these instances, Jesus is rebuking the Pharisees (or ‘the scribes and Pharisees’ in the Matthean text) for some aspect of their traditions. Though the text does not state that the Pharisees held this belief or that, Matt 23:1 states that Jesus is speaking ‘to the crowds and to his disciples.’ That he identifies the Pharisees in particular as holding these beliefs, rather than attributing them to the largely Jewish ‘crowd’ suggests that these traditions were unique to the Pharisees. These traditions regarding purity are also attested in the early rabbinic literature: concerning the transmission of impurity from one vessel to another, see *m. Yad.* 4:6;²²² concerning

221. Franz Mußner, *Der Galaterbrief* (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1977), 80 sees this as referring to the ancestral traditions, which he calls ‘den Zaun um die Tora’. Additionally, he notes several linguistic parallels from other Jewish writings, notably: Josephus, *Ant.* 13.297, 408; 19.349; Sir 8, 9; 2 Macc. 7.2; 3 Macc. 1.23; 4 Macc. 16.16; and Mark 7:3. A similar phrase can be found in Acts 22:3. Here, the author presents Paul as describing his education under Gamaliel (identified elsewhere in Acts as a Pharisee, as seen above) as being ‘according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers’ (RSV). However, this translation takes liberties with the sense of the Greek, which reads *κατὰ ἀκρίβειαν τοῦ πατρῶου νόμου*; a better translation would be ‘according to the ancestral laws.’ This translation is also offered by Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 316, who notes that ‘the Lucan Paul specifically mentions Gamaliel identified as a Pharisee in 5:34’ and connects his name with the key theme of *akribeia* (“accuracy,” “precision”), the hallmark of the Pharisees in Josephus.’

222. This passage presents the Pharisaic view that an unbroken stream of liquid flowing from a pure vessel to an impure vessel does not render the first vessel or its contents impure. However, Meier,

tombs and dead bodies, see *m. Yad.* 4:7; and concerning the purity of Temple features, see *t. Hag.* 3:35; *m. Ker.* 1:7. We also find evidence of traditions concerning proper tithing practices (cf. Matt 23:23; *m. Pe'a* 2:5-6; *m. 'Ed.* 1:2), the proper observance of holy days (cf. Mark 2:23-28; Luke 14:1-6; John 5:1-18; *m. Roš. Haš.* 2:5; *m. 'Erub.* 6:2), and the proper grounds and procedure for divorce (cf. Mark 10:1-12; *m. Yad.* 4:8; *m. Git.* 4:2-3).

Josephus states that these ancestral traditions allowed the Pharisees to make themselves 'appear more religious than others' (*War* 1:110), which implies that the Pharisees thought of themselves as being somewhat elite among the chosen people of Israel. Whether this implies a heightened sense of the sect's own status as 'chosen' is open to debate. In a similar vein, Baumgarten notes that the Pharisees 'wore the same clothes as everyone else, with only the minor statement of special identity expressed through *broad* phylacteries and *long* fringes,' which would be visible even if worn under other clothing.²²³ This again might serve to make themselves appear 'more religious' than non-Pharisees. However, with this one exception, the Pharisees did not dress any differently than other Jews of the day. Additionally, Josephus tells us that they 'despise delicacies in diet' (*Ant.* 18:12), though we may assume that they still kept kosher laws, as proscribed in the Torah. Indeed, with the exception of those traditions regarding the purity of containers and the transmission of impurity, the Pharisees do not appear to have developed any additional, non-Torah based traditions regulating food. For example,

Marginal Jew III, 368, n. 89 notes that this 'is only one possible interpretation of this obscure passage about *niššôq*.' He points to Jean Le Moyne, *Les Sadducéens* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1972), 212, who notes that previous scholars have suggested possible translations of this passage as referring to an aqueduct, or to honey (specifically, insect honey). However, Le Moyne agrees with 'l'interprétation ordinaire, qui se trouve dans tous les anciens commentateurs', which suggests 'le sens de jet, flux' for *niššôq*.

223. Baumgarten, *Flourishing of Jewish Sects*, 102.

Luke 7:36 depicts a Pharisee sitting down to a meal with Jesus in a private home, a clear indication that meals with non-members were allowed by the group.²²⁴

The above sketch is, admittedly, rather brief, and volumes can be (and have been) written on the group known to us as the Pharisees. However brief, though, this sketch does provide us with a starting point in our attempt to determine the sectarian and Jewish nature of this group. Returning to our list of identifying group features from the previous chapter, we find several of the criteria present in the ancient discussions of the Pharisees. There is a name for the group (Pharisees), as well as a sense of common origins. Though this is never stated, it is heavily implied in the Pharisaic emphasis on ‘ancestral traditions,’ traditions passed down through the generations. Admittedly, this does not necessarily imply a kinship, fictive or otherwise, between members of the group, but it does point to a common origin in time, that is, the founding of the Pharisees, an event which is unique to group members. This carries into the third identity feature, shared memories, which are again implied in ‘ancestral traditions.’ These traditions point to common historical figures and events shared by the Pharisees. One need hardly speak of elements of a common Pharisaic culture. Already we have emphasised the ‘ancestral traditions’ which the Pharisees observed as being equally important with Torah, but which were not required of or, it seems, observed by the majority of Jews in antiquity.²²⁵ Lastly, we may assume a sense of solidarity on the part of the Pharisees, again implied by their adherence to ‘ancestral traditions.’ These

224. See also Baumgarten, *Flourishing of Jewish Sects*, 97–100; Baumgarten, “Ancient Jewish Sectarianism,” 391.

225. In Meier’s view, the Pharisees felt these traditions should have been observed by ‘the whole people of Israel’ (Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 330). However, it seems clear from the literature, particularly where the Pharisees are in disagreement with, variously, Jesus or the Sadducees, that these traditions were upheld primarily by the Pharisees themselves.

traditions bound group members to one another in the face of outsider opposition, or outsider apathy.

We can easily observe five of the six group identifiers laid out in the previous passage, though the sole outlier, a link with a homeland, remains elusive. I know of no source which suggests the Pharisees considered any particular part of the world to be their ‘homeland,’ by which I mean, a homeland unique to the Pharisees. Their role in the political history of Palestine from the Hasmonean era through to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE suggest that they were located in or around Jerusalem, though this does not imply that the Pharisees considered Jerusalem to be their ‘homeland.’ Rather, one would more correctly speak of the Pharisaic attachment to the Promised Land as their home, much as any member of the Jewish identity group in the ancient world would claim an attachment to that geographic region, centred in Jerusalem and the Temple.

It seems clear, then, that the Pharisees exhibited a clear sectarian identity, and possessed a layer of identity markers unique to themselves, which were not possessed by the majority of first century Jews. However, despite this clear identity, the Pharisees also exhibit many unquestionably Jewish boundary markers, centred in religious traditions. Of Dunn’s four pillars of Judaism, the Pharisees easily exemplify each criteria: they adhere to the worship of the one God of Israel, as proscribed in the Torah (at the interpretation of which they are particularly skilled), and they possess (or at least, saw themselves as possessing) an elite status among the people of Israel, the most chosen of the chosen, perhaps. The Pharisees are also depicted as participating in worship at the Temple²²⁶ and in synagogues, along with other Jews who were not necessarily members

226. Wayne McCready goes so far as to state that the Pharisees’ ‘particular view of the Temple is one of the elements that is determinate of the make-up of their own identity’; this is true for the Qumran community, as well; Wayne O. McCready, “The Sectarian Status of Qumran: The Temple Scroll,” *Revue de Qumran* 41 (1982): 183–84.

of the sect.²²⁷ Similar observations may be made regarding Sanders' pattern of common Judaism: the Pharisees share a sense of election with the Jewish people, all of whom adhere to Torah as a sign of that election and in order to fulfil their covenant with God; they possessed a view 'where the Law had a salvific role'.²²⁸ Though the Pharisees also adhered to their ancestral traditions, in addition to Torah, their atonement and salvation still came through the Law. It seems obvious, then, that though the Pharisees exhibited unquestionably sectarian characteristics, they did so within the larger framework of first century Jewish religious tradition, as exemplified by the elements laid out by Sanders and Dunn.

The Sadducees

We turn now to the second most well attested Jewish group from the first century CE, the Sadducees. Like their Pharisaic counterparts, the Sadducees appear in all three of the sources examined so far, though not nearly as frequently as their relatively well documented brethren. However, unlike the Pharisees, who received a varied treatment in each of our sources, the Sadducees are portrayed negatively across the board.

Perhaps the only positive thing which may be taken from the ancient information regarding the Sadducees is that Josephus considered them to be one of the three 'sects' or 'philosophies' of Judaism (*War* 2.119; *Ant.* 13.171; *Life* 1:10); both the New Testament (cf. Mark 12:18; Matt 2:23; Luke 20:27; Acts 5:17; 23:6-9) and later rabbinic literature further testify to the existence of a group called the Sadducees. Those rabbinic texts which speak to the existence of a group which we call the Sadducees are those

227. Baumgarten, *Flourishing of Jewish Sects*, 108; cf. Luke 6:6 and John 12:42, in which it is implied that the Pharisees have some control over the synagogue; Baumgarten returns to this point in Baumgarten, "Ancient Jewish Sectarianism," 391.

228. Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 330.

same examined in the previous section, which discuss the legal disputes between the פרושים and the צדוקים (primarily *m. Yad* 4:6-8 and *t. Hag.* 3:35). However, beyond the very fact of their existence, the scarcity of material on the Sadducees allows us to sketch only the briefest of summaries regarding who they were and what set them apart as an identifiable group.

Unlike the Pharisees, the Sadducees are not mentioned in the writings of Paul, making the earliest reference to the group Mark 12:18. In the whole of the New Testament, the Sadducees are only mentioned 14 times, and not a single instance occurs outside of the Synoptics and Acts. However, as with the Pharisees, the Sadducees are consistently presented as being opposed to Jesus, who warns against them (together with the Pharisees; cf. Matt 3:7; 16:1, 6, 11, 12) or is questioned by them (Mark 12:18; Matt 22:23; Luke 20:27). In these last three mentions, we are also given our first bit of information regarding what sets the Sadducees apart as an identifiable group, that they ‘say that there is no resurrection.’ This is echoed at Acts 23:8, where the Sadducean denial of angels and spirits is also testified, while the Pharisaic belief in all three of these, resurrection, angels and spirits, is affirmed. We find this discrepancy of belief between the Sadducees and the Pharisees present also in the writings of Josephus, who presents nearly everything he has to say regarding the beliefs of the Sadducees as being directly set against those of the Pharisees: the Sadducees do not believe in fate, while the Pharisees do (*War* 2:164; *Ant.* 13:173); the Sadducees do not believe in the immortality of the soul, or in an afterlife, while the Pharisees do (*War* 2:165; *Ant.* 18:16-17). Here, then, we have attestations from two of our sources that the Sadducees did not hold a belief in an afterlife, while the Pharisees did. As regards the belief in angels and spirits, or fate, we find only singular attestation from Acts and Josephus, respectively. Elsewhere in Josephus, we are told that Sadducees reject the Pharisaic practice of

adhering to ancestral traditions, instead focusing primarily on the Law of Moses (*Ant.* 13:297), which suggests that the Sadducees were strict adherents to the legal guidelines and traditions of the Torah. However, the New Testament literature is silent on this matter, while the rabbinic literature (and, in Meier's words, 'common sense'²²⁹) suggest otherwise. Sanders notes that Hyrcanus I, who became a Sadducee after having been a Pharisee, would have had to employ non-Torah based traditions in making judgments and rulings,²³⁰ while the rabbinic literature detailing legal debates between the Pharisees and the Sadducees presents the Sadducees as arguing several points which are not found in the Torah, and which therefore may be understood as uniquely Sadducean traditions. On this point, then, we find two sources in direct disagreement, though it seems likely that Sanders, Meier and the Mishna are correct in suggesting a unique Sadducean body of tradition.²³¹

The Book of Acts also suggests that the Sadducees were, to some degree, in control of the temple: 'the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon him' (Acts 4:1), linking the Sadducees with the command structure and daily practice of the Temple; and 'when the high priest arose and all those with him, the sect (αἵρεσις) of the Sadducees' (Acts 5:17),²³² suggesting that the high priest was himself a member of the Sadducees. This priestly link to the temple is unsurprising. According to

229. Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 400 argues that in order for the Sadducees 'to carry out the daily liturgy in the Jerusalem temple' among other aspects of their priestly roles, they 'would have had to develop, pass down, and rely upon all sorts of traditional rubrics not written in the Torah.'

230. Sanders, *Judaism*, 333–34.

231. Though it is somewhat outside the scope of this examination, it must be noted that we have no verifiably Sadducean literature with which to compare the New Testament, rabbinic and Josephan presentations of the group. However, Jonathan Klawans has suggested that the Wisdom of Ben Sira bears many similarities to what Josephus reports the Sadducees as (not) believing, and posits that this may suggest Sadducean authorship for wisdom literature. See Klawans, "Sadducees".

232. Cf. Grabbe, "When is a Sect a Sect," 124.

Meier, the Hebrew צדוקים ‘most likely comes from the name Zadok..., the priest of Jerusalem who served both King David and King Solomon.’²³³ Further, Josephus identifies one high priest, Ananus the Younger (who held the title in 62 CE), as being a Sadducee (*Ant.* 20.199).²³⁴

As with the Pharisees, this is an admittedly and, inevitably, brief sketch of who the Sadducees were and what set them apart as an identifiable group. They, too, have a common name for their party, which suggests a common origin and, if we accept the commonly held view regarding the origin of the name ‘Sadducee,’ also suggests a common historical figure who is uniquely important to the group. We also have indirect evidence of unique Sadducean cultural elements in the form of their own traditions and interpretations of Law, as evidenced by both Josephus and the rabbinic literature. It has been suggested that the Sadducees may have been responsible for producing much of the wisdom literature,²³⁵ a fact which, if true, would make these texts part of a uniquely Sadducean body of texts and provide further evidence of uniquely Sadducean cultural elements. We may also observe a sense of solidarity on the part of the group, a fact

233. Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 394 Cf. Schürer, Vermes, Millar, and Black, *The History of the Jewish People*, 2.413; Sanders, *Judaism*, 25; Le Moyne, *Les Sadducéens*, 152–63, and Wayne O. McCready, “Sadducees and Ancient Sectarianism,” *Religious Studies and Theology* 12, no. 2–3 (1992): 82–83. However, there is much debate over the origins of the name ‘Sadducees.’ Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 450–52, n. 23 also offers an extensive excursus on the name ‘Sadducee’ and its origins, noting that the most probable alternative derivation is from the Hebrew צדִיק, ‘just’ or ‘righteous’, and he notes that ‘some scholars simply play the agnostic and suggest that the Zadok who was the source of the name Sadducee is otherwise unknown to us.’ Cf. Klawans, “Sadducees,” 262–64, who argues that there is no ancient evidence that the Zadok from whom the name Sadducees is likely derived was the Zadok of the time of David and Solomon.

234. Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 396–99 also suggests the possibility that several others who held the high priesthood belonged to the Sadducees, and makes an observation similar to my own that the priests of the Temple are portrayed as being tied to the Sadducees, concluding that ‘it is fairly probably that, from Ananus I to Ananus II, seven high priests under direct Roman rule were Sadducean’, and that ‘during more than half of the period of direct Roman rule, a Sadducee certainly or probably occupied the office of high priest.’

235. Klawans, “Sadducees”.

which is highlighted particularly by the presentation of the Sadducees as being opposed to the Pharisees; as seen in the previous chapter, opposition to an outsider serves as one of the primary unifying factors in group identity formation. However, as with the Pharisees, we are given no indication that the Sadducees identified a specific geographical area as a unique group homeland. Through their ties to the high priesthood and the Temple, we may assume that the group existed primarily in the area around Jerusalem, and perhaps within the Temple itself to a large degree. However, they did not have a sole claim to the Temple, and in none of our sources are they said to have viewed the Temple or the surrounding area as a uniquely Sadducean homeland. This, then, suggests that they, too, viewed the Jewish Promised Land as their home.

This is not the only indication that the Sadducees may be understood both as an identifiable group in their own right and as part of the larger Jewish identity. As we saw, Josephus identified them as one of the three sects or philosophies 'of Judaism', clearly linking them with the larger Jewish identity group. Additionally, they are described as being fiercely adherent to Torah, going so far as to reject the Pharisaic adherence to ancestral traditions in addition to Torah. While this was demonstrated to be erroneous, it does suggest a Sadducean acceptance and defence of Torah, something equally supported by the rabbinic presentation of the Sadducees as being engaged in legal disputes with the Pharisees (though, admittedly, the rabbinic literature tends to favour the Pharisees, it still implies that the Sadducees, however wrong they may be in the minds of the authors, sought to defend Torah as they understood it). And though there is no specific statement regarding the Sadducean view of their own election, the Mishnaic presentation of the group defending their interpretation of scripture implies a sense on the part of the group that correct Torah observance was key to covenantal fulfilment. This ties in directly with both Sanders' and Dunn's presentations of Judaism. Torah

observance is central the people's election in both works, though Sanders' pattern of common Judaism goes on to highlight the role of Torah in atonement and salvation which is not attested in the source material available to us.

We also find that the Sadducees are depicted as being tied in some way to the Temple, though it is unclear to what extent. At least one high priest is identified by Josephus as being a Sadducee, and the New Testament implies that the temple priests and commanders were either part of or at least related to the Sadducees in some way. Here again, the Sadducees fit Dunn's four pillars, suggesting an identity as Jews which existed alongside, or perhaps over, their identity as Sadducees. We may, then, identify the Sadducees as existing within the larger Jewish identity group.

The Essenes and the Qumran Community

The last of the three 'sects' identified by name in the works of Josephus is the Essenes,²³⁶ about whom he writes extensively (*War* 2:119-155; *Ant.* 13:171-172; 18:18-22); above, we noted that the Essenes receive far more attention than do either the Pharisees or the Sadducees. But we are faced with a problem of method in discussing the Essenes. Of our three sources, the New Testament and the rabbinic literature are silent regarding this enigmatic group, leaving our only witness of these three sources to be found in the works of Josephus. Recalling to mind some of the issues raised earlier regarding the reliability of Josephus, we are also faced with a seeming failure of method; without more than one source with which to compare, we cannot have multiple attestations of any given point of information regarding the Essenes, and therefore we cannot speak to the reliable historicity of some Josephan observation or another. It

236. As already indicated, the Essenes are often linked with the Qumran community. See note 166.

would seem, then, that we have reached something of a stumbling block. However, we are saved by the fact that Josephus was not the only author to discuss the Essenes in the first century CE, he is merely the only author of the three previously surveyed sources of information on Jewish sects. In addition to the Josephan, New Testament and rabbinic literature, we find mention of the Essenes in the writings of Philo, a first century Alexandrian Jewish leader, and the letters of Pliny the Elder, a first century Roman author. Both Philo and Pliny were excluded from our previous survey of sources due to the fact that each speaks only of one of the sects in question, the Essenes. However, they are not without their own problems as source material. I have chosen to forgo a second excursus on the problems of source, however, due to the relative paucity of information regarding the Essenes in both Philo and Pliny. Rather, problems of source will be examined where appropriate in the following discussion. I will, however, briefly speak about the sources as viable, independent sources of information. As in the case of the New Testament, Josephus, and the rabbinic literature, I know of no connection which exists between the account of Pliny and the account of Philo, or between that of Pliny and that of Josephus, so in instances of multiple attestations between those sources we may reliably assume historicity. It must be noted, however, that a case may be made for Josephus having used Philo as a source for his own writings; Tessa Rajak observes that ‘it cannot be denied that Josephus had some familiarity with what predecessors wrote about the Essenes. He undoubtedly had parts of Philo at his disposal’, and that it is therefore possible that Philo may have been the source for Josephus’ description of the Essenes in the *War*.²³⁷ Rajak ultimately determines that ‘it makes little sense to ascribe the immediate detail of the *Jewish War* account to Philo, above Josephus himself, whose

237. Rajak, “Ciò Che Flavio Giuseppe Vide,” 153.

knowledge should have been considerably more direct and extensive',²³⁸ before concluding that Josephus drew on first-hand experience with the Essenes when composing the *War* description.²³⁹ Thus, while we must be aware that Josephus had access to parts of Philo's writings, we may treat Josephus as a viable, independent source, and maintain the standard of multiple attestations for our examination.

Additionally, we must here note the evidence provided by the Dead Sea Scrolls of the community located at or near the Qumran site. As noted above, there is a consensus among scholars that the Essenes and the Qumran community which produced the Dead Sea Scrolls were related.²⁴⁰ That there was more than one group associated with the Qumran documents is commonly accepted. Eyal Regev suggests that, when discussing the people responsible for the Dead Sea Scrolls, 'one should distinguish between two different branches or sub-groups within the Qumran sectarian movement - the *yahad* of the Community Rule [1QS]...and the Damascus Covenant of the Damascus Document [CD].'²⁴¹ Philip Davies suggests that the *yahad* was not a sect, 'but a sect of a sect of Judaism',²⁴² suggesting that the Damascus Covenant either existed first, or that at the very least it represented some kind of a majority in this particular sectarian community. Where exactly the Essenes fit into this arrangement, or if they represent a third segment of the community, is unclear. Regardless, 'there is...a core of texts which

238. Rajak, "Ciò Che Flavio Giuseppe Vide," 154.

239. Rajak, "Ciò Che Flavio Giuseppe Vide," 159–60.

240. See note 166.

241. Regev, *Sectarianism in Qumran*, 7. See also Philip Davies, "The 'Damascus' Sect and Judaism," in *Pursuing the Text: Studies in Honor of Ben Zion Wacholder*, ed. John C. Reeves and John Kampen (Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 70–84 and Philip Davies, "Who Can Join the 'Damascus Covenant'?" *JJS* 46 (1995): 134–42.

242. Philip R. Davies, "Sect Formation," 140.

are the product of the [Qumran] community and its ideology,²⁴³ and from these texts we may explore the sectarian and Jewish identities of the Essenes and the Qumran community. For this reason, I have elected to treat the two together.²⁴⁴

Here, then, we begin as with both the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and acknowledge that it seems undoubtable that there existed a community called the Essenes in the first century CE. As stated, Josephus includes the Essenes among his three sects of Judaism (*War* 2:119-155; *Ant.* 13:171-172; 18:18-22), and the group is also described by Philo, one of the most prolific Jewish authors from the first century, who provides an extensive description of the community (*Prob.* 1:75-91; *Hyp.*, as quoted by Eusebius, 11:1-18; and *Praep. Evang.* 8). Additionally, the Roman philosopher Pliny the Elder makes mention of the Essenes (*Natural History* V.XV.73). To my knowledge, none of the Qumran documents make mention of a group called the Essenes.

Aside from the fact of their existence, we can be reasonably sure of several other aspects of the Essenes. Philo (*Prob.* 1.75) and Josephus (*Ant.* 18.20) both tell us that the sect number approximately 4,000 male members. This identical figure, in the words of Rajak, ‘clinches the dependence’ between the two accounts, or at least between these two accounts and an unknown third source to which both Philo and Josephus had access;²⁴⁵ of course, as noted above, this does not preclude the possibility of both authors offering the number 4,000 based on their own first hand experiences with the sect.

243. Grabbe, “When is a Sect a Sect,” 115.

244. For the remainder of this examination I will default to use of the term ‘Essenes’ as a catch-all to mean those individuals who were members of the Qumran community in some way.

245. Rajak, “Ciò Che Flavio Giuseppe Vide,” 147.

Our sources also speak about several traditions and habits that are unique to the Essenes. Josephus records that one part of the community allowed no female members, no wives of male members, and no marriage (*War* 2.120; *Ant.* 18.21). This finds corroboration in the testimony of Pliny the Elder, who notes that the community is *sine ulla femina* and that they *omni venere abdicata*.²⁴⁶ Josephus further notes that there was a part of the community which allowed marriage, though they maintained very strict rules regarding the taking of wives (*War* 2.160-161), a statement which seems to speak to the sectarian nature of this already sectarian group, to the fact that this sub-group appears to have divided itself into further sub-groups. Additionally, 1QS appears to indicate that the *yahad* was a celibate group, though it is unclear whether the Damascus group was as well. CD 7.6-8 suggests that some parts of the group did marry, as seen in both the Josephan and Philonic descriptions of the Essenes, further suggesting a tie between the Essenes and the Qumran community.²⁴⁷

As regards the location of the sect, we receive a varied picture from our sources. Josephus writes that ‘they have no one certain city, but many of them dwell in every city’ (*War* 2.124), suggesting a relatively wide-spread, if not overly numerous group. However, it is unclear whether Josephus means that Essenes dwell in every city in Judaea, or in Palestine, or in the whole Roman world. This problem is compounded when we take Philo’s account into consideration. At *Prob.* 1:76, Philo states that the Essenes ‘live in villages, avoiding all cities on account of the habitual lawlessness of those who inhabit them,’ a statement that seems directly contradictory to that of Josephus. Philo’s account seems to be the more accurate, however, when we consider

246. ‘...without any women’ and ‘...came having renounced everything.’ This is also attested at *Hyp.* 11.14-17 as quoted by Eusebius; cf. Grabbe, “When is a Sect a Sect,” 116.

247. For more on this, see Baumgarten, *Flourishing of Jewish Sects*, 102–04, Philip R. Davies, “Sect Formation,” 139, and Grabbe, “When is a Sect a Sect,” 115.

Pliny's statements; he locates the Essenes 'on the western shore [of the Dead Sea]', slightly to the north of what 'was formerly the town of Engedi.' This seems to agree with Philo's statement that the Essenes are removed from larger cities, preferring instead more rural or remote locations, though whether it is due to the lawless nature of urban inhabitants may be pure speculation on the part of Philo. The Qumran documents tell us that at least one part of the community was organised into 'cities' and 'camps' (CD 12.19, 23; 13.20; 14.3). Though these passages do not specifically state that these were located apart from existing urban centres, when taken with Pliny's location of the Essenes and the remote location of the Dead Sea Scrolls caves, it is safe to assume that they lived apart from the bulk of society.

Both Josephus and Philo record that the Essenes did not buy or sell among themselves. Rather, they gave freely to 'him that needs it', and enjoyed community property and meals (*War* 2:127). Though Josephus makes no statement regarding commercial interaction with outsiders, Philo notes that the Essenes 'are utterly ignorant of all traffic, and of all commercial dealings' (*Prob.* 1.78), suggesting that members did not buy, sell or trade with outsiders. This points to complete withdrawal from society on the part of the Essenes, who presumably were able fully to meet the needs of the community without non-member interaction. Though this particular point is found only in Philo's accounts, and even there it is only implied, both Philo and Josephus attest that the Essenes did not buy or sell goods to one another, but rather lived in a communal society. This finds further attestation in Pliny's *Natural History*, who records that the Essenes were *sine pecunia*, 'without money.' Though Pliny makes no comment regarding the communal lifestyle of the sect as portrayed in Philo and Josephus, his observation that they were without money implies exactly that sort of lifestyle. Along the same lines, both Philo and Josephus attest to the fact that no member of the Essene

community possessed servants or slaves (*Ant.* 18.21; *Prob.* 1.79). Josephus records that this is because possessing servants ‘tempts men to be unjust’, while Philo records that members view those who keep servants and slaves as being ‘unjust’ and ‘impious, because they destroy the ordinances of nature, which created them all equally.’ We find a singular statement in Josephus that members ‘wore standard clothes, as children under strict discipline’ (*War* 2.126), which Baumgarten understands as serving to enhance a sense of a equality between members of the sect.²⁴⁸ From all of this, it is clear that the Essenes practised a communal life. However, the Qumran literature presents a different picture. While members were prohibited from engaging in business activities with non-Jews (CD 8.14-16), they were permitted to engage in cash purchases between other members and Jewish non-members, thus limiting the spread of potential impurities (1QS 6.20-22). However, they were not permitted to work with outsiders in any capacity (1QS 5.14-20).

There is also a clear sense of separation on the part of the Essenes, whom we have already observed had removed themselves somewhat from society both in the location of their community outside of major urban areas, and in their seeming refusal to engage in commerce with outsiders. Above, we saw that the New Testament depicts a Pharisee sitting down to a meal with Jesus, a non-member, and from that we can assume that there was no Pharisaic admonition against joining non-members in a meal, though, of course, this was attested in only one source, and so cannot be accepted unquestioningly. We find a similar singular attestation regarding the dining practices of the Essenes, in the *War* account of Josephus, where we learn that before a meal the Essenes purify themselves, and ‘after this purification is over, they all meet together in an apartment of their own, into which it is not permitted to any of another sect to enter’

248. Baumgarten, *Flourishing of Jewish Sects*, 102.

(*War* 2.129). Though there appear to have been different rules for persons at various stages of initiation, once fully initiated into the sect, a member could no longer eat with outsiders.²⁴⁹ Perhaps the most striking feature of the Essene sub-group is not those practices in which they engaged, but in those in which they refused to participate. In our discussion of both the Pharisees and the Sadducees, we observed historical observations that both were, in some way, linked to the Jerusalem Temple, and at various points in history, members of both groups had served as high priest. The Essenes, on the other hand, had no such connection with the Temple. Instead, we are told:

‘and sending votive offerings to the temple, they perform sacrifices διαφορότητι ἁγνείῳν ἃς νομίζοιεν [with a difference of holiness which they have adopted], and on account of this εἰργόμενοι [they are shut out] of the common precincts of the temple; ἐφ’ αὐτῶν τὰς θυσίας ἐπιτελοῦσιν [they perform sacrifices by themselves].’ (*Ant.* 18.19; my emphases)

Of particular note in this passage are those sections for which I have provided both the Greek and my own translation, as they speak not only to a unique practice of the Essenes, but also to their separation from first century society. Perhaps the most revelatory of these three sections of interest is the second, the participial form of ἔργω, because the passive voice of this verbal construction indicates that, at least in the view of Josephus, the Essenes were barred from the Temple by outsiders. However, the first noted section of this passage indicates that the Essenes were not entirely passive in their exclusion, as they had adopted ‘a difference of holiness’ which set them apart from others involved with the Temple, most likely some issue of purity. And as a result of this difference of holiness and their exclusion from the Temple, the Essenes ‘perform sacrifices by themselves,’ that is, within their own community, and outside the Jerusalem Temple. Both the Damascus Document and the Community Rule make

249. Baumgarten, *Flourishing of Jewish Sects*, 94.

similar statements regarding the Temple and issues of purity. CD 3.14 presents the belief that ‘all Israel’ had erred, particularly in the matter of celebrating holy days (cf. CD 4.13-5.11 for other Torah disagreements). The Qumran community held to an older solar calendar, and believed that the lunar calendar which was introduced into the Temple in the 2nd century BCE was false, and that those who held to it celebrated holy days incorrectly.²⁵⁰ Similarly, the Community Rule sought to ‘atone for the guilt of iniquity...without the flesh of burnt offerings or the fat of sacrifice’ (1QS 9.4), that is, outside the Jerusalem Temple.

We have then, to borrow from Lester Grabbe, the picture ‘of a movement that has partially but not wholly withdrawn from society,’²⁵¹ despite the fact that there were some clear areas of tension between the Essene community and the larger society in the first century, centred primarily around issues of purity and the Temple. From this, we can also paint the picture of a clearly identifiable group, with a common name (Essenes), elements of a common culture which are unique to the group (partial group celibacy, communal lifestyle, abhorrence of slavery, group-specific meals, a ‘difference of holiness’ for sacrifices performed outside the Jerusalem Temple), and a sense of solidarity on the part of the group (best exemplified, perhaps, by their separation from society to the western shores of the Dead Sea). This is a less clear picture than that painted for the Pharisees and the Sadducees, though this is understandable given that, despite receiving the longest treatment in Josephus, there is relatively little information available from those sources surveyed so far on the Essenes. However, it seems that, unlike for their Pharisaic and Sadducean counterparts, it would be difficult to demonstrate a concurrent Jewish identity on the part of the Essenes.

250. Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 498–99.

251. Grabbe, “When is a Sect a Sect,” 116.

As noted, the Essenes are included in Josephus' list of the three sects of Judaism, a fact which helps to demonstrate a Jewish identity in addition to an Essene identity. Additionally, Josephus identifies the Essenes as being Ἰουδαῖοι μὲν γένος, 'Jews by birth' (*War* 2.119), a description he limits specifically to the Essenes. We are also able to observe an Essene adherence to monotheism and a veneration of Torah (*War* 2.128, 145, 147; *Ant.* 18.18), and though it is not explicitly stated in our sources, we may assume the common Jewish view of atonement and salvation through Torah observance. The line in the sand, so to speak, for determining the Jewish identity of members of the sect of the Essenes seems to focus instead around their views towards purity and the Temple. Regarding purity, we examined Josephus' account of pre-meal purification for fully initiated members of the group, following which they partook of a meal to which non-members, and even members who were not yet full initiates, were forbidden. Josephus' emphasis on the pre-meal purification only serves to strengthen the idea that non-members were forbidden because they did not practice the same levels of purification as members; this served to create 'outsiders' out of other Jews, those who normally would be considered 'insiders' in the religious context of first century Judaea.

In addition, we are told that the Essenes performed sacrifices 'by themselves' because they had adopted a 'difference of holiness' regarding Temple practice, something which is supported in the Qumran documents. As a result, they have been excluded from Temple participation (or, perhaps, they have withdrawn from Temple participation). In Dunn's opinion, the promised land focused in the Temple is one of the four pillars of Judaism, and thus an important feature to the life of any individual or group which might claim membership in the Jewish identity group. However, it is clear that the Essenes, though excluded, whether this was self-imposed or forced upon them by others, from the Jerusalem Temple, did not cease Temple activity altogether. Indeed,

the same passage which tells us they were shut out of the Temple also tells us that the Essenes, rather than giving up or changing their beliefs, simply performed sacrifices on their own; Meier notes that ‘the temple, be it in its present, interim, or eschatological state, was central to Qumran’s theology.’²⁵² Whatever the reason for their exclusion from or lack of participation in the Jerusalem Temple (as stated, most likely one of purity), the Essenes still demonstrated an adherence to the need for the type of sacrifices offered in the Temple. They merely did so outside of the existing Temple structure and hierarchy. This suggests that the Essenes may have seen themselves as some sort of alternative, ad hoc, or perhaps (and most likely) *true* Temple, one which existed in a state of proper purity and which would serve until such a time as the existing Temple structure was returned to this state of proper purity. They did not abandon the Temple, and thus do away with all Temple practices. Rather, as Baumgarten states, the Qumran community ‘organised itself as a replacement for the Jerusalem Temple.’²⁵³ These individuals, whether called Essenes or Qumranites, ‘acted as if they were priests as a protest against the main-line institutions of the society,’ that is, the common practices of the priests in the Jerusalem Temple.²⁵⁴ And this, coupled with the group’s self-imposed separation from society, implies a heightened sense of the group’s sense of election; they seem to have viewed themselves as the elite of the elect, those among the Chosen People who adhered to the correct forms of purity and religious observance. Thus, despite their clear sectarian identity, it is possible to demonstrate a ‘mainstream’ Jewish identity which existed alongside or, at least, in addition to their identity as Essenes.

252. Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 499.

253. Baumgarten, *Flourishing of Jewish Sects*, 109. Cf. 1QS 8.13-16.

254. Baumgarten, *Flourishing of Jewish Sects*, 108.

Other Sects in the First Century

In addition to the three major sects of Judaism for which we have multiple sources, there are a handful of other Jewish groups described solely by Josephus. While this single attestation does prevent us from examining these other groups as objectively as the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes/Qumran community, a brief examination of each still offers some insight into the prevalence and importance of Jewish identity markers in the first century CE. In addition to the three Jewish sects above, Josephus offers some information on a desert ascetic named Bannus, the Zealots, and the Sicarii.²⁵⁵

Mention of Bannus appears only in Josephus' *Life* 1.11. We learn that, after examining each of the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes during his quest to determine which Jewish group was the best,²⁵⁶ Josephus retreated to the desert and

255. Josephus also makes mention of a group called the 'Fourth Philosophy,' which appears in *Jewish Antiquities*. This movement is attributed to 'Judas and Sadduc' (*Ant.* 18:9; subsequently, Josephus calls Judas 'Judas the Galilean;' *Ant.* 18:23), and is given brief consideration by Josephus following his discussion of the three primary Jewish sects. Here, Josephus claims that the 'fourth sect of Jewish philosophy' agrees 'in all other things with the Pharisaic notions;' if we accept this as true, then this 'Fourth Philosophy' is also clearly a sect of Judaism, for the same reasons as are the Pharisees. The only difference between this fourth group and the Pharisees, it seems, is that the Fourth Philosophy 'say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord,' and that not even fear of death for themselves or their families will 'make them call any man lord' (*Ant.* 18:23). It would seem, then, that one could make a case that the so-called 'Fourth Philosophy' was nothing more than a group of Pharisees, perhaps even a sub-group of the Pharisaic sub-group, who agreed with the larger Pharisaic sect in all things except one, that they would have no master but God. This is, in fact, a key difference, and suggests that the members of the Fourth Philosophy would have viewed the Pharisees (that is, the mainstream Pharisees, if we assume the Fourth Philosophy to be a sub-group of that sect) as outsiders. Additionally, the fact that Josephus felt it necessary to identify this group as a distinct Jewish group is telling. Sadly, though, this is the only information we are offered regarding the Fourth Philosophy, though it is enough to offer an understanding of the group's sectarian nature within first century CE Judaism, and to suggest a sense of Jewish identity for members of the Fourth Philosophy. I have chosen to address the so-called 'fourth philosophy' here due to recent scholarship which questions the existence of a 'fourth philosophy' in the first century CE. According to Steve Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 274, there 'seem to have been all sorts of peasant movements...that were opposed to Roman rule for a variety of economic and political reasons.' Cf. Richard A. Horsley, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), xi-xxviii.

256. And, according to Steve N. Mason, "Was Josephus a Pharisee?" 34, being unsatisfied by any of the three.

sought out a man named Bannus. In terms of information about Bannus, Josephus tells us only that he ‘lived in the desert, and used no other clothing than grew upon trees, and had no other food than what grew of its own accord, and bathed himself in cold water frequently’ (*Life* 1.11). It is not even clear if Bannus had followers in addition to Josephus, though we may assume he did. Josephus introduces Bannus with the participial *πυθόμενος*, from *πυθάνομαι*, which translates primarily as ‘to learn by inquiry’ (LSJ). Given that Josephus characterises his knowledge of Bannus in this way, we can assume that knowledge of the man was reasonably easy to come by, and that others may have sought him out as well. However, this is the extent of the information provided by Josephus, though we may still glean further information from these scarce sentences.

While we cannot, from the information provided, determine whether any group which formed around Bannus could be considered a sect of Judaism, we can assume some level of a Jewish identity. Given that Josephus includes his time with Bannus in a description of his sampling tour of what he calls the three sects of Judaism, it is not unreasonable to place Bannus in a similar category as a sect of Judaism. This is given further support when we note that Josephus, unquestionably a Jew and, as we saw, possibly a Pharisee, was quite enamoured with Bannus and his teachings; in the words of Reinhold Mayer and Christa Möller, ‘Die Persönlichkeit dieses Mannes [Bannus] sowie die Hauptelemente seiner Lebenshaltung scheinen den jungen Josephus stark angesprochen zu haben, denn er blieb drei Jahre bei ihm.’²⁵⁷ However, it must be noted that Josephus relates to us nothing of the man’s theological principles. Le Moyne

257. Reinhold Mayer and Christa Möller, “Josephus - Politiker und Prophet,” in *Josephus-Studien*, ed. Otto Betz, Klaus Haacker, and Martin Hengel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 272. Cf. Steve N. Mason, “Was Josephus a Pharisee?” 35: ‘Where the regular schools had proved empty, the desert monk offered something that met Josephus’ needs.’

suggests that Josephus ‘choisit un idéal de vie, celui des Pharisiens, qui lui paraît plus en rapport avec son experience de retraite au désert que l’idéal sadducéen’,²⁵⁸ an observation which leads Mason to suggest that Bannus and the Pharisees ‘had a good deal in common.’²⁵⁹ The only things we know for sure are that Bannus wore no clothes made from animal products, ate nothing that did not grow (a vegetarian, of sorts), bathed in cold water (‘in order to preserve his chastity,’ we are told), and ‘lived in the desert,’ none of which speak to us of the man’s self-identification as a Jew or something else. The statement that Bannus ‘lived in the desert’ is perhaps the most telling of the few bits of information provided by Josephus; for whatever reason, Bannus had removed himself, and any followers he might have had, from society. This reflects the physical separation of the Essenes and the Qumran community, and suggests that Bannus was the leader of some sort of sect. Thus, we have two bits of information that speak to the group identity of Bannus and any of his followers, one which suggests a place within Judaism, and one which suggests a sectarian aspect to the ascetic. Beyond these assumptions (and they are just that: assumptions), little can be said of Bannus and his followers.

More prominently mentioned are the groups called the Sicarii, which appears in both *The Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*, and the Zealots,²⁶⁰ which appears only in *The Jewish War*, though the Zealots are mentioned far more frequently than the Sicarii. Of the Sicarii, we are told that they were ‘robbers’ who took their name from the

258. Le Moyne, *Les Sadducéens*, 28.

259. Steve N. Mason, “Was Josephus a Pharisee?” 36.

260. Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 205–07 is correct in noting that Simon the Zealot, one of the Twelve, was not, and could not have been a member of the party of the Zealots as described by Josephus. He notes: ‘the organised revolutionary faction that Josephus calls “the Zealots” came into existence only during the First Jewish War, specifically during the winter of A.D. 67-68 in Jerusalem. To make Simon the Cananean a “Zealot” in the narrow sense of a member of this organized group of armed rebels is hopelessly anachronistic.’ Cf. Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 257, n. 20 for an extensive bibliography on this.

weapons they carried²⁶¹ and used to assassinate targets in crowds gathered ‘to worship God’ (*War* 2:254-255; *Ant.* 20:186-187); they emerge near the beginning of the Jewish revolt of 66-70 CE. The Zealots, similarly, are a military organisation which emerged near the beginning of the Jewish revolt. We are told very little about them by Josephus, and much of what we are told is questionable. The Zealots are described as ‘difficult to disperse, because of their multitude, and their youth, and the courage of their souls’ (*War* 4:193), and it is clear that they are based in the Jerusalem Temple (*War* 4:215). However, Josephus later states that the Zealots ‘are but few in number,’ and that they are confined to, not based out of, the Temple (*War* 4:253). We are therefore left with only two sure pieces of information regarding this group: first, they were, as the name implies, zealous for their faith;²⁶² and second, they had some connection to the Temple (at the very least, they were allowed to enter, though it seems probable that they were, in fact, based around the Temple). However, we are left only with assumptions regarding the self-identification of these groups, as in the case of those other groups described only by Josephus. We may assume that they displayed some of the boundary markers of Jewish identity, and state with some certainty that they understood themselves as part of a unique sub-group within the larger society.²⁶³

261. For a discussion on the name *Sicarii*, see Valentin Nikiprowetzky, “Josephus and the Revolutionary Parties,” in *Josephus, the Bible and History*, ed. Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), 230.

262. Nikiprowetzky is careful to point out, however, that ‘zealous’ could be applied to ‘any Jew of extreme sensitivity on points concerning respect for God and the honour of his law,’ as with the Jews mentioned in Acts 20:21, Simon the Zealot in Luke 6 and Acts 1:13, or as Paul describes himself in Galatians 1:14, and that the name only comes to refer to this specific group around 66 CE; Nikiprowetzky, “Revolutionary Parties,” 233. Additionally, Josephus notes that, during his three years studying with Bannus, ‘ζηλωτῆς ἐγενόμην αὐτοῦ’, which is usually rendered ‘I became his devoted disciple.’ While this translation does express the magnitude of Josephus’ commitment, an equally valid and far more literal translation would read ‘I became his zealot.’

263. Some scholars have suggested that these Jewish sects and the early Christ-following communities may best be understood as Greco-Roman voluntary associations. This comparison will be explored following Chapter 3.

Summary

In the preceding chapter, we have examined the various sub-groups of Judaism which existed in the first century CE, and so stand as contemporaries of the earliest Christ-followers, both in time and location. In our search for the origins of the concept of a fully distinct Christian community, one described with ‘ethnic’ language by later authors, both Christian and non-Christian, this survey of the highly varied Mediterranean context into which the Christ-following communities first emerged provides a useful starting point. In the case of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes/Qumran community, it is possible to observe not only those boundary markers which are unique to each group, which serve to identify and set apart each group, but also to observe unquestionably Jewish identity markers among all three, features which place members of each group firmly within the Jewish identity group despite their simultaneous sect-related identities. To a lesser extent, the same may be said of those groups identified only in the works of Josephus. We also observed the presence of multiple identities in the voluntary associations of the Greco-Roman world, which provided individuals with a replica of the Greek *polis*, and an identifiable group membership in addition to their self-identification as, variously, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, etc. As noted at several points in this examination, scholarship has often sought to address the earliest Christian communities in terms of Jewish identity; in the next chapter, we will turn our attention to the Pauline Christ-following communities directly, and explore the extent to which they demonstrate identifiably Jewish boundary markers.

CHAPTER 3

PAUL IN A MEDITERRANEAN SOCIAL CONTEXT

Having explored modern treatments of ancient identities, and the prevalence of multiple group identities for individuals in the first century CE, our examination now turns directly to the writings of Paul. In the introduction to this study, I observed that several ancient sources, dating primarily from the early second century, employed ‘ethnic’ terminology in describing the Christian community. Note again the statements made by Tertullian (*Ad Nat.* 8.1), Aristides (*Apol.* 2.2), the *Epistle to Diognetus* (1.1) and 1 Peter 2:9, where we find the terms γένος (*genus* in Tertullian’s Latin; cf. Suetonius, *Nero* 16), λαός, and ἔθνος, translated ‘race,’ ‘people,’ and ‘nation,’ respectively. I also noted the statement by Josephus, from late in the first century, which identified the τῶν Χριστιανῶν...τὸ φύλον, ‘the tribe of (the) Christians’ (*Ant.* 18.64), adding φύλον, ‘tribe,’ to our list of ‘ethnic’ descriptors applied to the Christ-followers. But, as noted throughout this study, all of these sources significantly post-date the earliest extant Christian texts, the undisputed Pauline corpus, and reflect a very different view of the social world of the Mediterranean. The closest in time to Paul’s letters are the works of Josephus, which were composed after the disastrous Jewish rebellion which culminated in the destruction of the Second Temple, and after the Neronian persecutions of Christians described by Suetonius and Tacitus. These sources, then, can hardly speak to the origins of the ‘Christians as an ethnic group’ phenomenon. However, these sources do provide us with one method of examining the Pauline epistles for evidence of an identifiable Christ-following group. Exploring Paul’s use of this ‘vocabulary of identity’ will offer some insight into the apostle’s view of the Christ-following

movement at this time, and its relationship to or place within first century Judaism. This will demonstrate that Paul almost never applies these terms to the Christ-following groups. Thus, based solely on the criteria of vocabulary, the Christ-following communities do not seem to be identifiable as something other than a group within Judaism. However, identity in the first century was not based solely on the use, or lack thereof, of this vocabulary.

In the introduction to this study, we also examined the various boundary markers which existed around various identity groups in the first century CE, based on the list of group identity criteria offered by Hutchinson and Smith. Particular attention was paid to those boundary markers which identified members of the Jewish identity group, which included: identification with the common name Jew or Israelite; a belief in common origins and kinship, primarily through the line of Abraham; an acceptance of common historical memories, including historical figures (e.g., Abraham, Moses, David) and events (e.g., the Flood, the giving of the Law, the Exile); expression of common cultural features, which in the first century were primarily religious traditions; possession of a sense of connection with a homeland, that is, Judea; and a sense of solidarity between group members. However, we demonstrated that while these features could serve to help identify one as a member of the Jewish identity group, they were not necessarily the only boundary markers possessed by Jews in the first century. In the case of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes/Qumran community, one may observe both these Jewish boundary markers and additional boundary markers which were unique to each group. For example, in the case of the Pharisees there existed the common cultural feature of upholding ancestral traditions, while for at least one portion of the Essenes/Qumran community, we are told that they practised the unique cultural feature of group celibacy. Despite these additional identity boundary markers, members of each

of these uniquely identifiable groups still maintained their Jewish identity. Through the work of James Dunn and E.P. Sanders, we demonstrated the existence of overarching Jewish identity markers in each of the first century Jewish sects, as presented in Dunn's four pillars of Judaism²⁶⁴ and Sanders' pattern of common Judaism.²⁶⁵ It is, then, entirely possible for a group to possess Jewish boundary markers and unique group boundary markers simultaneously, to be identifiably Jewish *and* identifiably something else; it was not uncommon, then, for an individual to possess multiple levels of identity. Here, we have a second method of inquiry into the identifiable nature of the first century Christ-following communities. In light of the scholarship which attempts to address the early Christ-following communities, particularly those addressed by Paul in his letters, as sub-sets or sects of Judaism,²⁶⁶ similar to the Pharisees or Sadducees, I offer the second half of the following examination of Paul and his communities, to explore the presence of Jewish boundary markers within Pauline Christianity as presented in the undisputed Pauline corpus. Given the almost complete lack of application of the vocabulary of identity to the Christ-following movement in Paul's writings, and the predominant tendency to follow LXX usage of this vocabulary, it seems likely that we will be able to demonstrate a Jewish identity for the early Pauline Christ-followers which is similar to that of the Pharisees: Jewish *and* something else. However, use of this second method of examination will demonstrate that, while the Pauline congregations and Paul himself still displayed elements of these Jewish boundary

264. See James D.G. Dunn, *Partings of the Ways*, 19–35. Cf. Chapter 4 of this examination.

265. See Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 422 and Sanders, *Judaism*, 262–78. Cf. Chapter 4 of this examination.

266. Blenkinsopp, "Interpretation," 25 compares 'early Christianity' with the Qumran community, suggesting that both groups thought of themselves 'if not as the 'true Israel'...then at least the nucleus of the Israel of the last days...'; Baumgarten, *Flourishing of Jewish Sects*, 19 groups the Christians together with the 'Fourth Philosophy' and the Zealots as Jewish sects which emerged in the first century.

markers, and thus of Jewish identity, they simultaneously did not exhibit those features determined to be quintessential to members of the Jewish identity group.

Our examination henceforth will first examine Paul's use of the 'vocabulary of identity,' that is, his use of those terms identified above which we in the modern world consider to be 'ethnic' language and which were used to describe the early Christians. We will also explore other terminology which appears in Paul's letters and which also fits into the category of describing 'identity,' in order to attempt to illuminate Paul's view of his and his congregations' group identity. We will then examine Paul's letters in terms of the boundary markers of Jewish identity, described in the previous chapter, in order to determine the place of Pauline Christianity within the matrix of Jewish identity, that is, to what extent, if any, did Paul and his Christ-following communities display or adhere to unquestionably Jewish identity markers.

Pauline Christianity and the Vocabulary of Identity

It must be noted at the beginning of this portion of our examination that the 'vocabulary of identity' described so far, that is, λαὸς, γένος, φύλον and ἔθνος occur surprisingly rarely in the undisputed Pauline letters. Only ἔθνος occurs with anything approaching frequency, and even that, given the vast amount that Paul wrote, is relatively infrequent. However, rare use does not equal lack of meaning or import. On the contrary, it could be argued that rarely used words were specially chosen, in order to convey a greater import than more common words.

There are 10 occurrences of the word λαὸς in the undisputed Pauline corpus. Generally rendered 'people,' λαὸς in post-Homeric Greek was used to mean the whole population of a given city, country, or location.²⁶⁷ With the translation of the Hebrew

267. Strathmann, *TDNT*, vol. 4, 31.

Bible into Greek, however, ‘there has been a shift of meaning, so that the word is now a specific term for a specific people, namely, Israel...’; of the approximately 2,000 occurrences of λαός in the LXX, all but 40 render the Hebrew עַם, ‘people,’ which nearly always refers to Israel.²⁶⁸ An argument may be made that this sense of λαός-as-Israel is carried into Paul’s writings, as well. As has been noted elsewhere, ‘[i]n Paul...λαός appears exclusively in [Old Testament] citations. Where Paul himself speaks, he...avoids the term.’²⁶⁹ It is for this reason that I have chosen to address λαός first. Despite this observation, it must be noted that only eight of the 10 occurrences of λαός appear in direct citations of the Old Testament (Rom. 9:25*2, 26; 10:21; 15:10, 11; 1 Cor. 10:7; 2 Cor. 6:16). The remaining two instances of the term, at Romans 11:1 and 2, occur as Paul poses the question of whether or not God has rejected τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ, ‘his people.’ However, a strong similarity has been observed between the language of Rom. 11:1-2 and both 1 Kings 12:22 and LXX Ps. 93.14, which Robert Jewett calls ‘a significant verbal echo.’²⁷⁰ Thus, while not in direct quotations from the LXX, Paul is clearly referencing these passages, and from the surrounding context of these instances, in which Paul discusses the salvation of Israel, it is clear that in both 11:1 and 2, Paul’s use of λαός follows very closely with the LXX in referring to the people of Israel. The other instances of direct Old Testament citations also reflect a meaning of ‘Israel’ in Paul’s use of the word.

268. Strathmann, *TDNT*, vol. 4, 32. This pattern may also be observed throughout Philo’s writings and in Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities*, though in both the *Jewish War* and *Against Apion*, ἔθνος is used predominantly when referring to Israel.

269. Frankemölle, *EDNT*, vol. 2, 341.

270. Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 653. Cf. C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 2.543 and James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, World Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, Publisher, 1988), 2.636.

Despite the clear referent of every instance of λαός, Paul never applies the term directly to himself or to the Christ-following communities to whom and about which he writes. The only instance in which Paul even approaches such an application of λαός is at Rom. 11:1b, where Paul identifies himself as ‘an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.’ Here, Paul presents himself as an example of the people whom God has not cast off. Though I will return to this passage in greater detail below, I will here offer the observation that this single instance clearly suggests that Paul saw himself as belonging in some way to the Jewish identity group.

The least frequently occurring word of the vocabulary of identity in Paul’s writings is φῶλον, or φυλή, tribe. Though originally indicating a shared blood relationship, φῶλον came to be used to describe groups bound by ‘sacral law..., and then in the military and administrative fields.’²⁷¹ This was adopted into the Greek-speaking Jewish world as the word used to designate the twelve tribes of Israel, and more and more these are ‘bound together not only by common descent but especially by common leadership and law.’²⁷² In Paul’s writings, φυλή only appears three times, and two of the appearances follow this well established Jewish usage; at Romans 11:1 and Philippians 3:5, Paul claims to be φυλῆς Βενιαμίν, ‘of the tribe of Benjamin.’²⁷³ The third appearance, at 1 Thessalonians 2:14,²⁷⁴ sees Paul praising the Thessalonian Christians

271. Maurer, *TDNT*, vol. 9, 245.

272. Maurer, *TDNT*, vol. 9, 246–47.

273. Bockmuehl sees this claim as a sign of Benjaminite pride: Markus Bockmuehl, “1 Thessalonians 2:14–16 and the Church in Jerusalem,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 52, no. 1 (2001): 196. Similarly, Jewett, *Romans*, 653.

274. There has been some debate about the authenticity of 1 Thess. 2:13–16, due to the disparaging way in which Paul refers to the Jews here, assigning blame for the death of Jesus to them. See the discussions in Ernest Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (London: A&C Black, 1972) and Earl J. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995) for a further summary of this debate. I am intrigued by arguments put forth by John C. Hurd regarding the authenticity of this passage. Hurd suggests that the

for facing persecution from their συμφυλετῶν, a compound word derived from φυλή. Literally, this term translates as ‘those of the same tribe,’ and is often rendered ‘countrymen.’ While this departs from the common Jewish referent of the twelve tribes, this instance does follow the general Greek usage of φῦλον. Paul here is referring, most likely, to the non-Jewish, non-Christian community of Thessalonica, with whom the Christ-following Thessalonians would have been bound by common leadership and law. One may further assume that there was some sense of a shared kinship between Christ-followers and their non-member countrymen. Given his use of φῦλον in Rom. and Phil., it seems that Paul is most likely referring to this sense of shared kinship among the residents of Thessalonica, Christ-following or otherwise. However, elsewhere, Paul’s letters abound with familial language, and Paul often employed some form of the word γένος to express a kinship relationship between individuals.

Generally rendered as ‘family,’ ‘race,’ ‘people,’ ‘clan,’ or even used simply to describe items of a similar class, γένος carries a stronger sense of a familial or kinship bond than does φυλή. Three of the 10 appearances of γένος in Paul’s letters fall under the ‘similar class’ definition. At 1 Corinthians 12:10 and 12:28, Paul writes about γένη γλωσσῶν, ‘kinds/types of tongues,’ while at 14:10 we find γένη φωνῶν, ‘kinds/types of languages.’ Three other occurrences refer to a specific people, explicitly at Galatians 1:14 and Philippians 3:5, and implicitly at 2 Corinthians 11:26. At Philippians 3:5, Paul states that he is ἐκ γένους Ἰσραήλ, ‘from the people of Israel.’ The Galatians passage is far less clear, however. At 1:14, Paul describes how he ‘advanced in Judaism beyond many...among my own people.’ The Greek here reads ἐν τῷ γένει μου. Though there is

construction of 1 Thessalonians follows an A B A structure, used by Paul in other letters, as a means of emphasising certain points. In Hurd’s opinion, 1 Thess. 2:13-16 is a repetition of 1:2-10. See John C. Hurd, “Paul Ahead of His Time: 1 Thess. 2:13–16,” in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity: Volume 1: Paul and the Gospels*, ed. Peter Richardson and David Granskou (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 21–36.

the potential for ambiguity in this phrase, the final personal pronoun in this clause makes it clear to what people Paul is referring. The preceding clause described Paul's life 'in Judaism',²⁷⁵ and so the 'my people' to whom Paul refers at the end of 1:14 are those who were also 'in Judaism,' that is, Israelites.²⁷⁶ The third such occurrence of γένος is less clear, however. At 2 Corinthians 11:26, we find the phrase κινδύνους ἐκ γένους, 'in danger from a/the people,' in a list of hardships faced by Paul during his travels. This is the only appearance of the word without a qualifier of some kind; each of the passages from 1 Corinthians, Philippians and Galatians offer information about which group, exactly, is being referred to by γένος. However, given that in two other occurrences Paul uses γένος to refer to the Jewish people, and in the subsequent clause of v.26 he writes of being in danger ἐξ ἐθνῶν, 'from Gentiles,' it is safe to assume that here, too, Paul means the Jewish people.²⁷⁷

There are a further four instances of words occurring which are based on the root form γένος, and which all carry with them some aspect of a kinship relationship. In each of these four passages from Romans, Paul uses the word συγγενής, which is defined in LSJ as 'born-with,' 'natural,' 'of the same kin, descent,' and 'family with.' This is translated most often as 'kinsmen,' and in the earliest of these appearances, 9:3, Paul again is referring to the Jewish people. He writes that he would be willingly cut off from Christ for the sake of τῶν συγγενῶν μου κατὰ σάρκα, 'my kinsmen according to the flesh.' Κατὰ σάρκα is a common Pauline phrase when referring to physical, biological

275. Dunn writes that 'The phrase 'in Judaism' also implies a sense of being 'inside' a well-defined area.' James D.G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: A&C Black, 1993), 57.

276. J.B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1902), 81.

277. Cf. Jan Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 192.

descent²⁷⁸ (cf. Rom. 1:3; 4:1), as well as a contrast to things which are κατά πνεῦμα, according to the spirit (cf. Rom. 8:4; 8:13; Gal. 4:29; cf. Gal. 4:23; 5:17), though here it is most likely meant in the biological sense, rather than the theological. In the following verse, Paul specifically identifies these ‘kinsmen according to the flesh’ as ‘Israelites,’ which is itself one of the ways members inside the Jewish identity group referred to themselves.²⁷⁹ This initial occurrence of συγγενής follows the pattern of the LXX in referring to the people of Israel. However, of the four occurrences of this compound word, Romans 9:3 is the sole instance in which members of the Jewish identity group may be clearly understood.

Paul uses συγγενής three times in the final chapter of Romans to offer well wishes to certain individuals in the Roman Christ-following community: Andronicus and Junias (Rom. 16:7); Herodion (16:11); and Lucius, Jason and Sosipater (16:21). It would be easy to assume that these occurrences, like those above, refer to members of Paul’s ‘people,’ that is, in keeping with the previous usages, the Jews; Dunn suggests that all of those named, with the possible exception of Lucius, are Hellenized Jews.²⁸⁰ We find several clues regarding Paul’s point of reference, however, in the latter half of Rom. 16:7. In addition to calling them ‘kinsmen,’ Paul identifies Andronicus and Junias as συναιχμαλώτους μου, ‘my fellow prisoners,’ and he states that they ‘are of note among the apostles,’²⁸¹ and that they πρὸ ἐμοῦ γέγοναν ἐν Χριστῷ, ‘were in Christ before me.’ It seems clear that Paul is now calling members of the Christ-following

278. And here, ‘...it contains its usual negative overtone for Paul in the sense that here it denotes a too restricted understanding of the family who are God’s people...’ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, v.2, 525.

279. Jewett, *Romans*, 561.

280. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 894, 896, 909; cf. Jewett, *Romans*, 962.

281. RSV: ‘they are *men* of note among the apostles...’

community in Rome his ‘kinsmen.’²⁸² One could further observe the names of those singled out by Paul. Many commentators take the συγγενής in all three of these instances to refer to Jewish Christians, that is, Christ-followers who joined the nascent movement from within the Jewish identity group. Andronicus, an undeniably Greek name, is assumed to have been a Hellenized Jew, while Junias may be a masculine variation of the name ‘Junianus,’ but is more likely a Greek form of the common Roman female name ‘Junia.’²⁸³ Herodion is almost certainly a slave or freedman from the family of Herod, and thus almost certainly a Jewish Christian.²⁸⁴ Of the remaining names, neither Lucius, Jason or Sosipater are of Hebrew origin; each is a Greek name. While ‘Jason’ was a name ‘common among Jews, being used as a pure Greek substitute for Ἰησοῦς, which was simply a transliteration of *Yēšūa*’,²⁸⁵ and ‘Sosipater’ could very well be a longer form of the ‘Sopater’ of Acts 20:4,²⁸⁶ we are still left with the very Hellenized Λουκίος, Lucius. The name appears elsewhere in the New Testament only at Acts 13:1,

282. Most commentators take the view that this occurrence refers to Jewish Christian converts: cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, 788; F.F. Bruce, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 285; C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London: A&C Black, 1991), 283; and James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 2.894. In addition, both Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (New York & London: Doubleday, 1993), 738 and Jewett, *Romans*, 962 suggest a Jewish background for Andronicus and Junia, and both appeal to the usage of συγγενεῖς at 9:3. However, as noted above, the instance at 9:3 is qualified by the phrase κατὰ σάρκα, and each of the other instances of γένος in Paul’s letters is either qualified by some reference to Israel or Judaism (Phil. 3:5; Gal. 1:14) or is contrasted with some form of ἔθνος (2 Cor. 11:26). It seems odd that Paul’s use of συγγενεῖς without a similar qualification would be so easily read as identifying Jewish backgrounds for both Andronicus and Junia; one would expect a similar construction featuring a reference to Israel or the phrase ‘κατὰ σάρκα.

283. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 2.894 and Barrett, *Romans*, 259. Cranfield, *Romans*, 788 notes that Josephus makes mention of a Jew named Andronicus (*Ant.* 13.75). The question of ‘Junia’ has been most thoroughly addressed by Eldon Epp Jay, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), who argues quite persuasively for reading the name as the feminine ‘Junia.’ Epp further notes that ‘Junia’ is a Roman name (31; 94 n. 23).

284. Cranfield, *Romans*, 2.792; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 2.896.

285. Cranfield, *Romans*, 806.

286. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 2.909; Cranfield, *Romans*, 806; Jewett, *Romans*, 977–78.

though it is highly unlikely that these two passages refer to the same individual. It has also been suggested that the Lucius of this passage could in fact be the Luke of Col. 4:14, Phlm. 24 and 2 Tim. 4:11, as Λουκῖος can be a variant form of Λουκᾶς. However one takes the name, though, it is most likely a Hellenic Gentile name.²⁸⁷ Commentators have attempted to avoid the issue of Paul using συγγενής to refer to someone who clearly was not Jewish prior to joining the Christ-following movement by noting that the term may refer only to Jason and Sosipater.²⁸⁸ I know of no linguistic justification for this interpretation, however; the Greek may just as easily be understood to include Lucius in the list of ‘kinsmen.’²⁸⁹ The question becomes further unclear when one notes that Andronicus, widely assumed to be a Hellenized Jew, could as easily be a Gentile Christian. The same may be said of Junias, who could as easily be a Roman woman who joined the Christ-following movement as a Hellenized Jewish male. If we begin from this place of uncertainty regarding the histories of these individuals, the one thing that we can say with certainty is that Paul here applies the term συγγενής to members of the Christ-following community, with whom he does not necessarily share a physical, biological kinship connection. Instead, they share a kinship based on their joint membership in the Christ-following community. Paul uses συγγένης without a qualifying clause to describe fellow Christians who are not of the same ‘tribe’ as he, suggesting that his true ‘kinsmen’ are not κατὰ σάρκα. The familial, kinship relationship

287. So Cranfield, *Romans*, 2.805. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 2.909 takes this as a reference to Luke the evangelist, traditionally of Gentile origin.

288. As in Cranfield, *Romans*, 2.805, James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 2.909. Both F.F. Bruce, *Romans*, 264–65 and Jewett, *Romans*, 978 acknowledge this trend among scholars, and discard it in favour of assuming a Jewish background for Lucius.

289. While the weight of scholarship goes against my opinion on this point, I believe that my interpretation addresses the issue of both Lucius and the recognition that these ‘kinsmen’ are also ‘in Christ (before Paul himself)’ without inserting punctuation into the Greek in order to limit the scope of συγγενής to Jason and Sosipater.

was, for Paul, no longer based on shared physical descent, but on membership within the Christian community. This further suggests a meaning for συμφυλετῶν which emphasises the aspects of living under a common leadership or set of laws, as opposed to the aspect of a shared kinship. If Paul had meant to imply kinship, he most likely would have used συγγενής, a term which he seems to reserve for members of the Christ-following community. I will return to the issue of Christ-following kinship in the following chapter.

The word ἔθνος, meaning ‘nation,’ or later, ‘Gentile,’ is unique among the language surveyed so far in that it appears in Paul in various forms 46 times, more than all the other terms surveyed so far combined. In the LXX, ἔθνος is used to mean both ‘nation’ and ‘Gentile,’ though it is not until the Maccabean period that the religiously charged ‘Gentile’ meaning becomes the primary sense of the word. An examination of the occurrences of ἔθνος, as well as the corresponding Hebrew יג, confirms that in the LXX ἔθνος carried no specific religious connotation, good or bad, until very late, and that it was only in the course of Jewish history that it came to represent non-Jewish outsiders.²⁹⁰ However, in Philo and Josephus, both Greek-speaking Jewish authors writing in the first century CE, ἔθνος is never used as a stand alone contrast to the Ἰουδαῖοι or the λαὸς Ἰσραήλ.²⁹¹ Rather, ἔθνος is used primarily as a geographic locator, or an indicator of national origin; it only means ‘outsider’ or ‘Gentile’ when paired with either ἀλλότριος or ἀλλόφυλος. However, neither of these ‘outsider’ terms appears in

290. This is confirmed in several studies. Cf. Stephen Hre Kio, “Understanding and Translating ‘Nations’ in Mt 28:19,” *Bible Translator* 41, no. 2 (1990): 231, Severino Pancaro, “People of God in St. John’s Gospel,” *NTS* 16, no. 2 (1970): 116, Douglas R.A. Hare and Daniel J. Harrington, “Make Disciples of All the Gentiles (Mt 28:19),” *CBQ* 37, no. 3 (1975): 360, J. Gnanaseelan Muthuraj, “The Meaning of Ethnos and Ethnē and Its Significance to the Study of the New Testament,” *Bangalore Theological Forum* 29, no. 3–4 (1997): 16, and Bertram and Schmidt’s article on ἔθνος in *TDNT*, vol. 2, 365.

291. See Muthuraj, “The Meaning of Ethnos,” 18, and Schmidt’s section of the ἔθνος entry in *TDNT*, vol. 2, 371.

conjunction with any of the 46 occurrences of ἔθνος in Paul's writings; ἄλλότριος appears only four times, at Romans 14:4 and 15:20 and 2 Corinthians 10:15 and 16, while ἄλλόφυλος does not appear in the Pauline epistles at all. This would suggest that Paul has returned to the Maccabean use of ἔθνος, employing it to refer to non-Jews. Many modern translations render ἔθνος as 'Gentile;' for example, the RSV renders 34 of the 46 occurrences of the word as 'Gentile.' However, an examination of ἔθνος throughout Paul's letters suggests that 'Gentile' is not always the most appropriate translation. Indeed, many commentators assert that Paul is a missionary to the Gentiles, meaning non-Jewish religious others, but observe that many of those addressed in his writings are Jewish converts to the Christian movement. This fact suggests that Paul did not limit his mission to non-Jewish religious others, as implied in the use of 'Gentile,' but rather felt his mission was to those living outside of Judea, perhaps better understood as being 'to the nations,' rather than 'to the Gentiles.'

Of the 46 Pauline occurrences of ἔθνος, 11 occur in Old Testament quotations, and so will not be discussed at length here. It is worth observing that, as in the Old Testament, ἔθνος means both 'nation' and 'Gentile' in these quotations, in keeping with the LXX usage prior to the Maccabean texts.²⁹²

Of the remaining 35 occurrences, 17 should rightly be translated as 'Gentile.' In each of these instances, some form of ἔθνος appears in conjunction with some form of or reference to the words Ἰουδαῖος or Ἰσραήλ, fitting easily into the Jew/Gentile dichotomy.²⁹³ This count includes the one occurrence of the adverb ἐθνικῶς, meaning

292. The 10 OT quotations featuring ἔθνος in Paul's writings are: Rom. 2:24; 4:17, 18; 10:19 (two occurrences); 15:9, 10, 11, 12 (two occurrences); Gal. 3:8. Rom. 4:18, while not a direct quotation, indirectly cites God's promise to Abraham from Gen. 17:4, et alia.

293. These are: Rom. 2:14; 3:29 (two occurrences); 9:24, 30; 1 Cor. 1:23; 2 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 2:8, 9, 12, 14, 15; 1 Thess. 2:16.

‘Gentile-like’ or ‘in the way of a Gentile,’ at Galatians 2:1; ἔθνικῶς is contrasted with Ἰουδαϊκῶς, ‘Jew-like’ or ‘in the way of a Jew.’ This observation lends support to the idea that Paul has returned to a Maccabean usage of ἔθνος. If Paul is using neither ἀλλόφυλος nor ἀλλότριος to distinguish outsiders, in this case religious and cultural outsiders, from an insider group, it is safe to assume ἔθνος carries the basic meaning of a non-Jewish, religious other, particularly where it appears in contrast to Ἰουδαῖος or Ἰσραήλ. However, between occurrences in Old Testament quotations and where it appears in contrast to some mention of the Jewish people, we have accounted for only slightly more than half of the Pauline occurrences of ἔθνος. For the 18 remaining occurrences, many of which are translated as ‘Gentile’ in order to describe non-Jewish religious outsiders, this may not be the most appropriate rendering for ἔθνος. Most of the remaining occurrences are best described as geographic locators. Only a few should rightly be translated as ‘Gentile,’ though even these instances are ambiguous, while others still serve to distinguish non-Christian, rather than non-Jewish, religious others.

Two of the remaining occurrences of ἔθνος in the Pauline epistles are rendered, in modern translations, as ‘nation;’ Romans 1:5 and 16:26. Each of these occurrences is best described as a geographic locator, that is, rather than referring to a particular person or group of people, these instances refer to the geographic location of Paul’s mission. In both instances, this is ‘the nations;’ 1:5 states that Paul is spreading the name of Christ ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, ‘in/among all the nations,’ while in 16:26 Paul declares that Christ is now known εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, ‘to all the nations.’²⁹⁴ Several other passages in Paul’s

294. This translation, however, is by no means universally accepted among scholars. The sense of ‘nations’ is preferred by, e.g.: Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 427; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 1.18, 2.916; Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 464. Others prefer the translation of ‘Gentiles,’ arguing that this translation holds better with Paul’s claim to be the apostle to the Gentiles. In this camp, see: F.F. Bruce, *Romans*, 70, 268, who allows a translation of ‘nations’ but emphasises the sense of ‘Gentiles;’ Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.67; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 238, 755; Jewett, *Romans*, 1009. This reading suggests that Paul intends his mission to be only to the Gentiles, that is, the non-Jews, rather than to all people where he preaches, that is, ‘among the nations.’

writings contain similar constructions, though these are translated as ‘Gentile’ when, as with Rom. 1:5 and 16:26, they might be more accurately described as geographic locators. In Romans 1:13, Paul writes of his desire to reap a harvest among the Roman community as well as ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσιν, ‘in/among the rest of the nations,’ a dative construction identical to that found in 1:5.²⁹⁵ Other identical dative constructions of ἔθνος can be found at Galatians 1:16 and 2:2; in both, Paul writes about preaching the Gospel ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, ‘in/among the Gentiles,’ according to modern translation. But each of these instances would be better understood as geographic terms, locating Paul’s missionary activities ‘in/among the nations,’ that is, outside of Judea. And constructions of εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, as in Rom. 16:26, can also be found at Rom. 15:16 and Gal. 3:14, where Paul declares that he is a minister of Christ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, ‘to the nations’ (Rom. 15:16).²⁹⁶

We are left, then, with eight occurrences of ἔθνος to be considered. Of these eight, five occurrences are ambiguous; at Romans 15:9, 18, 27; 16:4; and Galatians 3:8, ἔθνος is used, but each could be read as either a group identity term or a geographic locator.²⁹⁷ Though this does not seem remarkable at first glance, it is significant that, so

295. It could be argued that Paul is, in this verse, contrasting the ἔθνεσιν with the Roman Christian community, and therefore this instance should be translated as ‘Gentiles,’ because Paul is referring to the non-members of the community. However, given that at no other instance wherein Paul uses ἔθνος to contrast the Christian community do modern translations render the term ‘Gentile’ (this will be discussed further below), and the fact that ἔθνος here serving as a contrast to the Christian community implies that the Jewish community would therefore be part of the ‘Gentiles,’ it seems more appropriate to render this instance ‘nation.’

296. Another instance of this construction occurs at Gal. 3:14, wherein Paul notes that the blessing of Abraham has come εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, ‘to the nations.’ In this instance, based on the context of the statement, it is widely accepted that Paul is here referring specifically to Gentiles, that is, non-Jewish others. Cf. Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 152; James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 178–79; and Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 123. The blessing of Abraham to which Paul refers is one which the Jewish identity group already possessed, and so it can only be made available to non-Jews. However, this is the only such instance of the εἰς τὰ ἔθνη which is unquestionably contrasted with some aspect of the life of Israel, in this instance, Israel as the bearers of the blessing of Abraham.

297. For example, cf. the arguments presented by Dieter Lührmann, *Galatians: A Continental Commentary*, O.C. Dean Jr. Continental Commentaries (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 60 and J.

far, the only occurrences in which ἔθνος could be said definitively to carry the sense of a religious ‘other’ are in those places where Paul uses it as a contrast to Ἰουδαῖος or Ἰσραήλ; in all the other occurrences observed so far, ἔθνος could serve as a geographic locator, or else is ambiguous in usage, allowing valid arguments to be made for both possible translations. This is true of 43 of the 46 occurrences of ἔθνος in Paul’s writings, leaving three occurrences in passages where it means neither ‘nation’ nor ‘Gentile.’

Two of these three aberrations of ἔθνος appear in 1 Corinthians, at 5:1 and 12:2, and represent two of the three occurrences of ἔθνος in the whole of this epistle (the other being at 1:23, discussed above). Similarly, the third such appearance may be found at 1 Thessalonians 4:5, one of only two occurrences of ἔθνος in the epistle (the other being at 2:16, discussed above). These instances of ἔθνος are used, as are many others, to contrast an insider group with an outsider group, and each of them is similar to some of those already examined. At 1 Cor. 5:1, Paul writes that he has heard of an immorality which is not found even ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, a construction which is identical to several of the geographic locator occurrences discussed above. But this verse clearly intends to contrast the ἔθνεσιν with another group, a nuance which would be absent if Paul were merely locating this activity geographically. The occurrences at 1 Cor. 12:2 and 1 Thess. 4:5 seem more clear cut, the former stating that the group in question worshipped idols when they were τὰ ἔθνη and the latter admonishing the group in question not to be like τὰ ἔθνη, who do not know God. From the evidence surveyed above, the first inclination is to read each of these occurrences as ‘Gentile;’ Paul is clearly referring to practitioners of Greco-Roman ‘pagan’ religions, who worshipped idols and did not know God,²⁹⁸ and

Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (London: Doubleday, 1997), 300–02.

298. Barrett identifies them as such, noting that ‘it is evident that many, though not all, of the Corinthian Christians had been non-Jews...;’ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Second ed. (London: A&C Black, 1971), 278.

who are regularly called ἔθνη in Jewish literature. Further, the fact that Paul levels the charge of idol worship against members of the group in question before they joined the insider group suggests a Jewish view; idol worship is forbidden at several points in the Torah, and the charge is often cited as being characteristic of the enemies of Israel (cf. Lev. 19:4; 26:1, 30; Deut. 29:17; 32:21). The charges levelled in the other passages are equally indicative of a Jewish world view. Sexual immorality is punished severely in the Old Testament (cf. Gen. 34:2; Lev. 18:8; 20:11), and Gentiles would generally not ‘know God.’ It must be said, however, that there is an odd aspect to the ἔθνη of these three verses; the group contrasted with ἔθνος is not the Jewish identity group. Previously, all the occurrences of ἔθνος which should be rendered ‘Gentile,’ and which therefore imply a Jewish world view, appear in close spatial proximity and grammatical relationship to some form of either Ἰουδαῖος or Ἰσραήλ (or, in the case of Gal. 3:14, an aspect of Israelite life). Neither 1 Cor. 5:1, 12:2, nor 1 Thess. 4:5 contains either of these words, or any other terms which would suggest a Jew/Gentile dichotomy. Rather, it is possible that Paul is using ἔθνος in these three verses to refer to non-*Christian* religious ‘others.’ Based on the larger context in which these verses are found, this is a fair assumption: 1 Cor. 5:1 and 1 Thess. 4:5 come amid several admonishments to the respective communities about proper behaviour, while 1 Cor. 12:2 describes the members’ lives prior to their conversion in a discussion of the spiritual gifts of the community. And though there are only three occurrences in which Paul appears to contrast ἔθνος with the Christians, rather than with the Jews, this suggests that Paul’s unqualified use of the word serves to contrast an identifiable Christian group.²⁹⁹ When

299. Commentators agree that the group being contrasted with τὰ ἔθνη in these three verses is, indeed, the Christian community, though they also cite Paul’s ‘Jewish’ world view as the source of his displeasure toward sexual immorality and idol worship. Cf. Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1987), 199–201, 578, Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 120–21, 278–79, Best, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 165, Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 199.

using ἔθνος in a more traditional sense, that is, in a Jewish sense, to refer to non-Jewish religious ‘others,’ Paul makes it explicit, and always pairs it with Ἰουδαῖος, Ἰσραήλ or some reference to Israelite life in some way. However, Paul never applies the term ἔθνος directly to the Christ-following communities to which he writes, and thus never directly identifies them as being an identity group. But his contrast of the Christ-followers with an ἔθνος suggests that he understood the Christ-following communities as possessing some aspects of an identifiable group.

In addition to the vocabulary of group identity surveyed here so far, we must also examine Paul’s uses of a few other words, namely Ἰουδαῖος, Ἕλλην, περιτομή and ἀκροβυστία. Each of these terms, translated ‘Jew,’ ‘Greek,’ ‘circumcision’ and ‘uncircumcision’ (literally ‘foreskin’), respectively, are used in group identification in Paul’s letters. Several instances of Ἰουδαῖος in Paul’s writings have already been discussed above, regarding their relationship with occurrences of ἔθνος. I have saved the remaining occurrences of Ἰουδαῖος, and the occurrences of Ἕλλην, περιτομή and ἀκροβυστία for this final section on Paul’s vocabulary of group identity precisely because of the interdependent nature of nearly every occurrence of each word.

Previously, several instances of Ἰουδαῖος contrasting with ἔθνος were discussed, leading to the conclusion that, in verses where both terms appear in connection with one another, ἔθνος was properly translated ‘Gentile.’ This accurately represents a Jewish world view, a part of which was the Jew/Gentile dichotomy. Of the 25 occurrences of Ἰουδαῖος, six of them appear with ἔθνος. Similarly, 10 occurrences of Ἰουδαῖος are used to contrast Ἕλλην, the Greek word for a Greek.³⁰⁰ If the Ἰουδαῖος/ἔθνος dichotomy can be said to represent a Jewish world view, the same can be said of the Ἰουδαῖος/Ἕλλην distinction. As noted in the introduction to this study, most people in the Mediterranean

300. Cf. Rom. 1:16; 2:9, 10; 3:9; 10:12; 1 Cor. 1:22, 24; 10:32; 12:13; and Gal. 3:28.

during the first century CE participated in Greek culture to some degree, and could therefore be considered, to some degree, Greek. What set the Jews apart was their unique boundary markers, and anyone who did not share these but did participate in some elements of Greek identity could be called Greek from the Jewish perspective. There are, in fact, only two occurrences of the word Ἕλλην in the undisputed corpus which do not appear with Ἰουδαῖος, these being Galatians 2:3, describing Titus as ‘a Greek,’ and Rom. 1:14, where Paul states that he is under obligation to Ἕλλησίν τε καὶ βαρβάρους, ‘both Greeks and barbarians.’ This is a common Greek formula employed to refer to the whole world, the Greek equivalent of the Jew/Gentile dichotomy. Here, then, Paul is expressing a Greek world view, one which seems at odds with the Jewish world view espoused elsewhere in his writings.

Paul also uses the word περιτομή, ‘circumcision,’ as a stand in for Ἰουδαῖος at several points, keeping with the tradition that, in the first century CE, circumcision had become synonymous with the Jewish people; to be circumcised was to be a Jew.³⁰¹ Conversely, the word ἀκροβυστία, literally ‘foreskin,’ but more correctly translated as ‘uncircumcision,’ appears in the place of words used to describe non-Jews, such as ἔθνος or Ἕλλην. In Philippians 3:5, Paul states that he, being born a Jew, was circumcised on the eighth day, drawing a connection between being circumcised and membership in the people of Israel. And at Romans 2:28, 29 and 3:1, Paul implies a connection between the words Ἰουδαῖος and περιτομή. In these three verses, everything that is said of a Ἰουδαῖος is also said of περιτομή, equating the two terms, and implying

301. Cf. Cohen, “Those Who Say,” 16. It must be noted, however, that circumcision was not the sole purview of the Jews. Herodotus claims that the practice originated among the Egyptians, Colchians, Ethiopians, Phoenicians, the ‘Syrians of Palestine’ and ‘the Syrians who dwell about the rivers Thermodon and Parhenius, as well as their neighbours the Macronians and Macrones’ (*Hist.* 2.104.2-3). Additionally, the Hebrew Scriptures imply that the descendants of Ishmael and Esau were circumcised (for Ishmael, see Gen. 17:23-26. It is never stated that Esau was circumcised, but it may be assumed that by the time of his birth, the practice had become common for the descendants and household of Abraham).

that they are synonymous: a ‘real Jew’ is not one ‘outwardly,’ and ‘true circumcision’ is not external; a real Jew is ‘one inwardly,’ and ‘real circumcision’ is ‘spiritual and not literal.’ Elsewhere in this passage, Paul asks ‘what advantage has the Jew’ and ‘what is the value of circumcision?’

The connection between περιτομή and Ἰουδαῖος becomes more concrete when one notes that περιτομή is used on several occasions in contrast to an occurrence of ἔθνος. At Galatians 2:8 and 9, Paul writes that he carried the mission εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, while Peter, James and Cephas carried the mission εἰς τὴν περιτομήν.³⁰² And at Galatians 2:12, Paul accuses Peter of eating μετὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν, ‘with the Gentiles,’ until he was forced to separate himself out of fear of ἐκ περιτομῆς, ‘those from circumcision,’ or ‘the circumcision party.’ Elsewhere, as at Galatians 2:7, περιτομή and ἀκροβυστία stand in for Ἰουδαῖος and ἔθνος/Ἕλληνας, directly contrasting with each other. This substantive use of περιτομή and ἀκροβυστία continues in other letters, becoming one way of referring to the whole world.³⁰³ This linguistic tool features prominently in Paul’s discussion of Abrahamic descent at Romans 4, where Paul determines that both the circumcised and the uncircumcised are descendants of Abraham, and therefore part of God’s covenant with Abraham.

The preceding examination of the vocabulary of identity in Paul’s letters has revealed many interesting observations, but of the greatest interest for this study is the fact that, with few exceptions, Paul does not apply this vocabulary to the Christ-

302. There is much debate on the issue of ethnic vs. geographic intention here. Betz, *Galatians*, 100 and Longenecker, *Galatians*, 59 see this as being an ethnic/cultural distinction, while Lührmann, *Galatians*, 40–41 and Frank J. Matera, *Galatians*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 77 favour, as do I, the geographical option. Dunn states that neither option ‘makes much sense.’ James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 111. Note that the accusative form of περιτομή appears only at Gal. 2:9. At 2:8, it appears as a genitive: εἰς ἀποστολὴν τῆς περιτομῆς, ‘to the mission for the circumcised.’

303. Cf. James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 107, Martyn, *Galatians*, 203 and Matera, *Galatians*, 77.

following community. While a case may be made that Paul uses συγγενής to refer to other Christ-followers at Rom. 16:7, 11, and 21, regardless of their origins as Jews or Gentiles, and that Paul uses ἔθνος as a contrast to the Christ-following community at 1 Cor. 5:1, 12:2, and 1 Thess. 4:5, thereby implying the ἔθνος nature of the community, the fact remains that this cannot be conclusively proven one way or the other. This lack of self-ascription of the vocabulary of identity seems to suggest very strongly that Paul and his congregations were, in Paul's view, still very much part of the larger Jewish identity group. With this in mind, we move to examine the Pauline corpus in terms of the Jewish identity boundary markers examined in the previous chapters.

Pauline Christianity and Jewish Identity

Above, I offered a brief restatement of those identifying features, those boundary markers, which existed around the Jewish identity based on the list of such features offered by Hutchinson and Smith. This, however, will only make up one part of the following examination of Jewish identity in the Pauline epistles. For the sake of ease, I will also offer brief restatements of Sanders' pattern of common Judaism and Dunn's four pillars of Judaism, which will comprise the basis for the other part of this examination. The pattern of common Judaism which Sanders describes appears in many of his works, and is, as noted, best summarised by Bernard Ukwuegbu:

‘(1) God has chosen Israel and (2) given the law. The law implies both (3) God's promise to maintain the election and (4) the requirement to obey. (5) God's rewards [sic] obedience and punishes transgression. (6) The law provides for means of atonement, and atonement results in (7) maintenance or re-establishment of the covenantal relationship. (8) All those who are maintained in the covenant by obedience, atonement and God's mercy belong to the group which will be saved....’³⁰⁴

304. Ukwuegbu, *The Emergence of Christian Identity*, 112.

This pattern places Torah central to one's identity as a Jew; Torah observance provides covenantal maintenance, atonement, and ultimately, salvation.

The four pillars described by Dunn are more concisely stated, yet cover a much broader spectrum: (1) monotheism - the belief that God is one; (2) election - the belief that God has chosen Israel as his people; (3) covenant focused in Torah, as the sign of that election; and (4) land focused in Temple, as the centre of Israel's religious life. Comparison of these two systems reveals numerous areas of overlap between them. Due to this overlap of several key features, the bulk of the following discussion will be presented primarily in terms of Dunn's four pillars. There will, of course, be areas that do not overlap, such as Sanders' suggestion that the law provides the means of atonement, or Dunn's assertion that the land, focused in the Temple, served as the centre of religious life in Israel in the first 70 years of the first century CE. Additionally, there are several instances in which Paul makes statements regarding his own Jewish identity which do not fall under any of the categories listed in either Sanders or Dunn. These will be given due consideration regarding the group identity of Paul and his congregations.

There are a handful of instances in which Paul identifies himself, either directly or indirectly, as a member of the Jewish identity group, through his self-ascription of the words Ἰουδαῖος and various forms of Ἰσραήλῃτης, the names commonly used to describe members of that group. At Gal. 2:15, Paul identifies himself among those who are φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι, 'naturally Jews,' a phrase generally translated as 'Jews by birth.' Rom. 3:9 features a similar statement. In his discussion which begins with the question 'Then what advantage has the Jew?', Paul's use of first person plural verbs at 3:9 when he asks προεχόμεθα undoubtedly includes himself.³⁰⁵ Elsewhere in Romans, Paul refers

305. Many modern versions offer the translation 'Are we Jews any better off?' So RSV. However, Dunn's observations regarding this passage cannot be ignored. In his commentary on the Roman epistle, Dunn observes: 'To take the first person plural as 'we Jews' is to narrow the discussion.... But the force of the sequence of first person forms in vv 5-8 was precisely to broaden the scope of the

to Israelites as τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν συγγενῶν μου κατὰ σάρκα, ‘my brothers/brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh’;³⁰⁶ his use of the phrase ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου, ‘for the sake of my brothers,’ to qualify the phrase ‘kinsmen according to the flesh’ is somewhat striking here, as it is otherwise used only of fellow Christ-followers.³⁰⁷

There are several instances in which Paul either states or implies that he considers himself to be an Israelite, or of the people of Israel, as well. We have already briefly examined Gal. 1:13-14, in which Paul implies that he, at one point, was part of the people who were ‘in Judaism,’ and Phil. 3:5, which finds Paul famously stating that he is ‘of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, as to the law a Pharisee.’ Similar statements also occur at 2 Cor. 11:22 (‘Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.’) and Rom. 11:1 (‘I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.’). In each of these three instances, Paul clearly identifies himself as existing within the Jewish identity group, using the group’s own insider terminology to make the point even clearer. Paul’s claim in the Philippians passage to be ‘according to the law a Pharisee’ also ties him to a prominent sub-group within Jewish identity, one which, as we have seen, readily displayed uniquely Jewish boundary markers. These passages also indicate Paul’s acceptance of another Jewish boundary marker, that of common origin and/or descent.

As noted, Paul twice identifies himself as a member of φυλῆς Βενιαμίν, the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5; Rom. 11:1), a reference to the Abrahamic lineage shared by the

discussion beyond the more narrowly Jewish perspective...and is clearly not intended to be identified with either group.’ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 1.146.

306. RSV offers the translation ‘my kinsmen by race.’

307. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 2.525.

founders of the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. Gen. 35:18; Ex. 1:1-3; Josh. 18:11). Further tying himself to the Abrahamic line, Paul twice states, as seen, that he is ‘a descendant of Abraham’ (2 Cor. 11:22; Rom. 11:1). In so doing, Paul clearly places himself within the traditional and accepted origins and lineage of the Jewish identity group. This claim to Abrahamic descent also demonstrates Paul’s keeping of another Jewish boundary marker, that of historical group memories. By laying claim to the group’s sense of common origin and descent, Paul also lays claim to the historical figures of Abraham and his sons, the patriarchs of the Jewish people.³⁰⁸

In a similar way, Paul identifies himself as a member of the Jewish identity group through elements of culture common to group members. Returning to Phil. 3:5, we find Paul stating that he was ‘circumcised on the eighth day’, in accordance with proper Torah observance. Paul also describes himself as being ‘extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers’ (Gal. 1:14); this zeal for ancestral tradition, which caused Paul to advance ‘in Judaism’ beyond many of his peers, seems a clear reference to Paul’s strict Torah observance and Jewish religious practice.³⁰⁹ Paul tells us that this zeal motivated him in his role as a persecutor of the Christ-following movement prior to his conversion (Phil. 3:6), as an observant member of the Jewish identity group seeking to correct what he viewed as erroneous members of the group. This leaves only two of the six criteria of group identity formation and maintenance to be addressed, that of group solidarity and a tie to a homeland. I will leave discussion of Paul and ties to a homeland

308. Again, Dunn’s observations are worth considering. He writes that Paul was ‘redefining the “people of God”’, by building upon his arguments from Rom. 4:13-18 and 9:7-8 that anyone with faith was a ‘descendant of Abraham’ and therefore part of the chosen people. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 2.635. The role of Abrahamic descent and fictive kinship in the definition of an identifiable Christ-following group will be addressed in the following chapter.

309. This could also be understood as a declaration of Pharisaic membership, referring to the unique ancestral traditions upheld by that group.

for later in this chapter, so as not to repeat myself. Regarding Paul's sense of solidarity with other members of the Jewish identity group, I will refer back to those passage examined so far that place Paul to some extent within the Jewish identity group: his use of plural, inclusive verbs and terms of Jewish identification; his claim to Abrahamic, i.e., Jewish lineage; his strict observance of Jewish religious tradition. Though he does not outright state that he shares a sense of solidarity with other members of the Jewish identity group, his display of other Jewish boundary markers carries a sense of solidarity with that group. Based on this list, then, it seems that Paul understood himself as possessing Jewish identity, at least in some way. But it must be noted that all of those instances identified so far as indicative of Paul's membership in the Jewish identity group apply only to the individual himself. He does not attribute these boundary markers to the Christ-following communities to which he wrote. Further, many of these instances refer to a past period of life for Paul: his 'zeal for the traditions of [his] ancestors' occurred in his 'previous way of life in Judaism,' that is, prior to his conversion; his circumcision took place when he was only eight days old, an infant; and one may argue that his claim to Abrahamic descent and the title 'Jew' or 'Israelite' are equally if not more so matters of birth rather than self-identification. It seems, then, that while Paul is acknowledging that he was born a member of this identity group, he does not necessarily see himself as fully a member of it still.³¹⁰ For a clearer indication of the Jewish identity

310. Betz, *Galatians*, 115 notes that Paul presents Jewishness as being 'determined by birth' at Gal. 2:15. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 137 highlights the changed nature of Paul, Peter, Barnabas and other 'Jews by birth' who have 'embraced the way of faith in Christ' and thus removed the barrier which existed between Gentiles and 'Jews by birth.' Martyn, *Galatians*, 248 asserts that 'there is no Jewish tradition in which Jews are said to be who they are as the result of a natural process;' rather, they are Jews based on their acceptance of traditions, and thus being 'Jews by birth' not only removes Paul and the others from identification through Jewish tradition, but also removes the Jew/Gentile dichotomy which previously existed for them. See also: R. Alan Cole, *Galatians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 86, Lührmann, *Galatians*, 46 and Matera, *Galatians*, 92.

of the Pauline communities, and of Paul himself following his Damascus road experience, we turn to an examination of Dunn's four pillars and Sanders' pattern of common Judaism within the Pauline epistles.

The first of Dunn's four pillars, the belief that God is one, provides a useful starting point in terms of examining Paul's place within the first century Jewish identity group. There are several telling passages in the undisputed corpus. At 1 Corinthians 10:14, Paul instructs his followers to 'shun the worship of idols,' a common theme throughout the Old Testament, and representative of the Jewish belief that only God, not idols, was to receive their worship. This injunction appears several times in Paul's letters: at Galatians 3:20, Paul reminds his followers that 'an intermediary implies more than one; but God is one,' and offers Old Testament quotations at 1 Corinthians 8:4, stating that 'an idol has no real existence' and that 'there is no God but one.'³¹¹ And in the following verse, Paul states that, while 'there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth,' that is, the gods of other nations or peoples, 'yet for us there is one God.'

However, the role of Christ-devotion in the early Christian movement often presents a problem in terms of Christian monotheism. It could be argued that Paul presents Christ in such a way that Christ may be understood as a second deity in Pauline Christianity. This is potentially problematic; not only did Jews in the ancient world refuse to accept or worship so-called 'pagan' deities, such as those of the Roman pantheon, they also upheld a clear divide between worship of God and veneration of important figures, such as angels or prominent earthly figures, like Moses. Loren Stuckenbruck in particular has highlighted a distinction between 'worship' and 'veneration', noting that the latter refers to 'honorific reverence, even praise' toward an

311. Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 370 understands this as 'a strong affirmation of monotheism over against every form of polytheism or henotheism.'

individual entity, while ‘worship’, in his estimation, ‘is organised in practice and expresses itself in terms of sacrifice.’³¹² With this distinction in mind, Stuckenbruck determines that ‘it is hard to find anything in Jewish sources that suggests Jews had ever assimilated inclusion of angels alongside God in worship into an organised cult, that is, into their temple-centred sacrifices and offerings.’³¹³ In this estimation, then, the God of Israel remains at the top of the cosmological hierarchy, with other important earthly or heavenly figures fitting into spaces below God; any veneration offered toward these figures ‘does not come at the price of reflection and focus on God.’³¹⁴ How, then, does Jesus fit into this strictly monotheistic tradition, given that early Christ-followers seem to have offered the type of worship normally reserved only for God to Christ? An easy answer would be that Jesus was viewed as a second deity by the early Christ-followers, but such a view would effectively do away with monotheism in early Christianity. However, reading Christ as a second deity in Paul’s letters is a dramatic oversimplification of what Paul writes.

Larry Hurtado notes that ‘Paul’s easy inclusion of devotion to Christ within his emphatically monotheistic posture nicely illustrates the intriguing nature of early Christ-devotion,’³¹⁵ a phenomenon which, in his estimation, ‘must be seen in historical terms as

312. Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “‘Angels’ and ‘God’: Exploring the Limits of Early Jewish Monotheism,” in *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism*, ed. Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Wendy E.S. North (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 69. He is careful to note that distinguishing between ‘veneration’ and ‘worship’ often relies on the context within ancient sources, as there was no uniform practice at this time; different authors held different ideas as to what constituted proper and/or improper attention.

313. Stuckenbruck, “‘Angels’ and ‘God,’” 68–69.

314. Stuckenbruck, “‘Angels’ and ‘God,’” 69.

315. Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 48–49.

a distinctive variant form of [Jewish] monotheism.³¹⁶ Despite the clear devotion to Christ, Paul does not use the same language when describing God as he does when describing Christ. For example, the term πατήρ, ‘father,’ is only applied to God. There are four instances in the undisputed corpus where πατήρ occurs in the same verse with ‘Christ,’ these being 1 Corinthians 8:6, 2 Corinthians 1:3, 11:13, and 1 Thessalonians 3:11. In each of these instances, however, πατήρ is paired grammatically with ὁ θεός, ‘God,’ a term which is also never applied to Christ. In every instance of discussing Christ’s relationship with God, Paul makes it clear that Christ is the son of God (cf. Rom. 15:6), and that Christ’s role in the salvation of mankind comes from God (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4).³¹⁷ There is still only one deity, one God, and for the Christian community, an earthly expression of that deity in Christ, sanctioned by God. Thus, despite a unique adaptation of the concept, Paul portrays a thinking which exists firmly within the first pillar of Judaism, espousing a monotheistic view.

The matter becomes less clear when we turn to a prominent aspect of Sanders’ pattern and Dunn’s second pillar, election. This is the belief that the one God of Israel has chosen the people of Israel to be His people, a concept which is addressed, albeit somewhat indirectly, in Paul’s writings. Three times in 1 Thessalonians, Paul tells his followers that they have been chosen. In each of these three instances, it is God who has done the choosing. The same may be said of the occurrence of choosing language at 1 Corinthians 1:27, as well as at Romans 8:30. In many of these instances, however, Christ plays an important role. At 1 Thess 1:3 and 5:9, God has chosen the elect people for

316. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 50.

317. Cf. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 52, who notes several further examples of ‘cultic reverence’ to Christ stemming from the one God.

‘steadfastness of hope’ in and ‘to obtain salvation through’ Christ.³¹⁸ Romans 8:30 follows a verse in which Paul states that those whom God foreknew, those whom He would call, were to be made in the image of His son. In other passages, such as Romans 1:1, it is unclear whether it is Christ or God who has called Paul ‘to be an apostle’ and ‘set [him] apart for the gospel of God.’³¹⁹ And, further compounding the question of the role of Christ in the election of the people, Romans 1:6 states that the community is comprised of those ‘who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,’ again leaving the agent of this election ambiguous, and implying a central role for Christ in the election of this people.³²⁰ We find, then, that though Paul was very much within the parameters of first century Judaism with regard to Dunn’s first pillar, with regard to Dunn’s second, and the initial phase in Sander’s pattern of common Judaism, the issue is not so clear. There can be no question that Paul thought of the Christian community as being a chosen people, but it is not always clear exactly who has chosen the community, whether God the Father or Christ the Son.

In terms of this second pillar, Paul and his congregations appear to be at least partially within first century Judaism, though this is by no means definitive; arguments can be made both for and against the classification of the Pauline Christian communities as first century Jewish sects on this merit alone. Paul’s place within the realm of first century Judaism is made even more unsure when one turns to Dunn’s third pillar and

318. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 255–56; Best, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 67–70, 217–18.

319. At 1 Cor. 1:1, Paul uses a similar phrase, writing that he was ‘called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus,’ making the agent of the election clear; here, it is the will of God.

320. Dunn notes that they are called ‘not “by Jesus Christ,”’ because ‘elsewhere in Paul it is God who issues the invitation/summons;’ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, v.1, 19. Jewett, *Romans*, 112 makes similar observations, but notes that there is no reason to assume that early Christians would have drawn a distinction between being called by Christ and by God in Christ.

several points of Sanders' pattern, the centrality of the Torah as the expression of the community's identity and election.

The law features prominently in Paul's letters, much more so than any of Dunn's other pillars of Judaism. In a few passages, Paul appears to place himself, and his congregations, under the Torah. In recounting his Jewish credentials to the Philippian Christian community, Paul proudly states at 3:5 that he was 'κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος, 'according to the law a Pharisee,'³²¹ and at 3:6 that he was κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος, 'according to righteousness in the law blameless.' Earlier in the Philippian correspondence, Paul calls the community ἡ περιτομή, 'the circumcision,'³²² an example of Paul equating the Torah with the physical expression of the law, circumcision. By stating that the Christian community is *the* circumcision, Paul is furthering the claim that his group, the Christian community, is at least a part of the chosen people, if not *the* chosen people. And at Galatians 1:14, Paul claims that he advanced ἐν Ἰουδαϊσμῳ, 'in Judaism,' beyond others ἐν τῷ γένει μου, 'among my own people,' because he was so zealous for τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων, 'the traditions of my fathers,' a common way of referring to the law,³²³ and possibly to the additional traditions upheld by the Pharisees, as discussed in the previous chapter. All of this seems to suggest that Paul still considers himself, and by extension his communities, as being adherent to the law. This is not the case, however.

321. It is worth noting that Bockmuehl, "1 Thess. 2:14–16," 198 states: 'One point worth pondering here is that Paul in no way suggests that he has ceased to be a Pharisee, just as he has clearly not ceased to be a Hebrew or indeed a Jew....' He also notes, however, that Paul both calls himself 'all things to all people' and that he refers to his 'previous life in Judaism,' allowing the possibility that Paul considered that part of his life to be in the past.

322. The RSV translation renders this as 'the true circumcision,' in order to better distinguish the Christian community from the Jewish.

323. Martyn, *Galatians*, 115.

Philippians 3:7 finds Paul stating that ‘whatever gain I had [from the Jewish credentials], I counted as loss for the sake of Christ,’ discarding whatever value his righteousness under the law might have gained him in favour of his role as a missionary for Christ, an aspect of his identity which he clearly valued highly.³²⁴ Paul further hints at his place under the law in Galatians 1:13-14, consigning his advancement in Judaism and his zeal for the traditions of his fathers to ποτε ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ, ‘my earlier life in Judaism which has now been left behind.’ The presence of ποτε here clearly sets this portion of Paul’s narrative in a previous time, one which has come to an end; he is now in the middle of a new phase of life.³²⁵

Elsewhere in Galatians, Paul writes that he has ‘died to the law, that I might live in God’ (2:19). This leads into a discussion on Abrahamic descent, in which Paul concludes that anyone who has the faith which Abraham displayed is part of the promise made to Abraham, rather than those who live ‘by the law’ (3:15-18).³²⁶ Paul develops this further in Galatians 5, stating in v.4 that anyone who seeks to be justified by ‘the law’ rather than by faith will be ‘severed from Christ,’ this being one of the clearest statements about membership in the Christian community; if one lives by the law, one is not truly part of the Christian community.³²⁷ Paul states this again at Galatians 5:18 when he says ‘if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.’ This theme continues to play an important role in Paul’s letters, and the same line of reasoning appears again in Romans 4, wherein Paul determines that it is faith, not adherence to the

324. Cf. Bockmuehl, “1 Thess. 2:14–16,” 205 and Bonnie B. Thurston and Judith M. Ryan, *Philippians and Philemon*, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 123–24.

325. See Martyn, *Galatians*, 153. Contrast this with Matera, *Galatians*, 58, who states that Paul ‘certainly did not apostasize from his former faith,’ citing Rom. 11 in support of this statement.

326. Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 140; Betz, *Galatians*, 152; James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 185.

327. Betz, *Galatians*, 259; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 256; Martyn, *Galatians*, 469.

Torah, that allows membership into the faith-based Pauline Christian community. At several points in the Roman correspondence, Paul states that man is justified by faith, apart from the law, as at 3:21, 28 and throughout chapter 4. At 7:6, Paul states that members of the Christian community ‘are discharged from the law,’³²⁸ and at 10:4 that ‘Christ is the end of the law.’

Paul also gets very specific in re-evaluating the role of the law in terms of identification, targeting two of the three tenets of the Torah that had come to be most associated with the Jewish group identity: circumcision of gentile believers and dietary laws.³²⁹ Above, we observed that Paul states at Gal. 5:4 that those who would be ‘justified by the law’ are ‘severed from Christ.’ This follows his statement at 5:2, that anyone who ‘receives circumcision’ is ‘bound to keep the whole law.’ In Paul’s reckoning, the issue of circumcision was inextricably tied to the law, as it also became the physical representation of being Jewish at this time. It must be noted, however, that Paul is not here railing against the practice of circumcision itself; his objection is to circumcision as a fulfilment of the Torah.³³⁰ By his own account, Paul was ‘circumcised on the eighth day’ (Phil. 3:5), and he never indicates that those who are uncircumcised are higher in the Christian community than those who are. Rather, at 1 Cor. 7:18, Paul

328. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 1.365 sees this as a two-fold statement. The Christian community is discharged from ‘life as regulated by the law at all points,’ and from ‘life dominated by the sinful passions and headed for death as so determined by the law.’ He disagrees with the idea that the Torah itself is done away with by Paul. However, Paul’s discarding of salvation from or value in the Torah effectively does away with role of the Torah in terms of Jewish identification.

329. James D.G. Dunn, *Partings of the Ways*, 28.

330. Acts 16:3 records that Paul himself took Timothy, ‘the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer,’ and circumcised him, ‘because of the Jews that were in those places, for they knew that his father was a Greek,’ in order for Timothy to follow Paul on his mission. This seems to go against several of Paul’s statements regarding circumcision, indicating that, in some instances, Paul favoured, or at least allowed, the circumcision of Christians. However, given the question of Acts’ historical accuracy, and the fact that it is a much later work by a secondary, if not tertiary source, we will give pride of place to the statements made by Paul himself in the undisputed Pauline corpus.

instructs his followers to remain in the state they were in when they became part of the Christian community: ‘Was any one at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was any one at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision.’ Paul only objects to circumcision when done in fulfilment of the Jewish Torah, as was being urged by the opponents mentioned in the Galatian correspondence,³³¹ and in attempts to relegate Gentile Christ-followers to a lower status than Jewish Christ-followers. In the view of his Galatian opponents, in order to become a Christian, one first had to become a Jew and keep the Torah in its entirety. It was this belief to which Paul objected, that membership in the Christian community was dependent on membership in the Jewish community. But, as he made clear on several occasions in his letters, this was not the case. These Jewish identity markers, as represented by both the law and circumcision in Paul’s letters, did not determine Pauline Christian identity.

Additionally, another practice which came to represent and in some ways define one’s membership in the Jewish community is devalued by Paul; adherence to the dietary laws is discarded for those in Christ. Turning again to Galatians, we find Paul criticising Cephas, that is, Peter, for acting hypocritically. Prior to the arrival of those whom Paul calls ‘men from James’ or ‘the circumcision party,’ Peter ‘ate with the Gentiles’ (Gal. 2:12), presumably having no trouble disregarding the dietary and purity restrictions prevalent in Judaism.³³² However, after the arrival of these men, Peter withdrew from even associating with the Gentiles, because he was afraid of the men from James. James, according to tradition, was a close relative of Jesus, and the leader of

331. Fee, *I Corinthians*, 312–13.

332. Acts 10:13-17 describes Peter’s vision from God which grants him permission to eat previously unclean foods.

the Jerusalem church. Though he was a model of Christian faith, he was equally a figure of Jewish piety, something which Paul indicates in calling the followers of James ‘the circumcision party,’ and suggesting that they were disapproving of Peter’s violation of dietary and purity laws.³³³ Though they were members of the Christian community of Jerusalem, they clearly still held to the Jewish Torah.

There are also examples of Paul devaluing the law which apply only in Sanders’ pattern of common Judaism, primarily the sixth part of the pattern as summarised by Ukwuegbu, the belief that the law provides for means of atonement, and the eighth part, that those who maintain the covenant through obedience and atonement will be saved. Those passages in which Paul addresses atonement make it clear that it does not come through the law or through sacrifice in the Temple. In one of his earliest letters, 1 Thessalonians, Paul writes that it is Jesus ‘who delivers us from the wrath to come’ (1:10), clearly identifying the vessel of salvation here as Jesus.³³⁴ In the later 1 Corinthians, Paul attributes both atonement and purity to Jesus, telling the congregation that ‘you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ’ (6:11),³³⁵ again suggesting that atonement is possible outside of the law, through Christ.

Paul directly employs the language διὰ Χριστοῦ, ‘through Christ,’ in 2 Corinthians and Romans. At 2 Corinthians 5:18, Paul carefully notes that all of the

333. Betz, *Galatians*, 108; James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 121; Martyn, *Galatians*, 232–34.

334. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 53–54 notes that in 1 Thess. 1:9 Paul uses the verb ‘*epistrepho*,’ which, ‘under the Semitizing influence of the LXX, soon acquired the technical, though not exclusive, meaning of ‘turning about’ in a religious or moral sense.’ This is a rare word for Paul, representing a new religious outlook. Cf. Best, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 81–82.

335. This is often taken as a possible reference to baptism; cf. Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 141, Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 453 and Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 246.

advantages given to the Christian community are ‘from God,’ but that these advantages are only accessible διὰ Χριστοῦ; ‘through Christ [God] reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.’ Again at Romans 5:11, Paul notes that members of the Christian community ‘rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation.’ As in the pattern of common Judaism, God is the source of atonement and reconciliation. However, there is a distinct difference in the vessel through which that atonement is accessible to the chosen community. In the pattern of common Judaism, the law provides access to this atonement; in Paul’s gentile Christian communities, Christ provides access.

Here, then, we find that Paul has dramatically moved away from the third pillar of Judaism as described by Dunn, and from several points of the pattern of common Judaism, as detailed in Sanders’ work. Rather than upholding the Torah as the sign of God’s covenant with his chosen people, Paul has devalued the role of Torah in atonement and salvation in the new Christian community. The Jewish sects surveyed in the previous chapter may have done so to varying degrees, but all placed a heavy emphasis on Torah observance, a key point in their worship of God. That Paul de-emphasises the role of Torah in the Christian community suggests that Paul did not see his communities as belonging entirely to Judaism. It must be noted that Paul seems to have had no qualms about formerly Jewish individuals continuing to practice Torah observance; his objection was to use of Torah observance as a means to exclude Gentile converts from the full benefit of the Christ-following communities. To counter this, Paul shifted the emphasis placed on Torah observance in Jewish religious tradition to Christ. A similar shift may be observed regarding Dunn’s fourth pillar of Judaism, land focused in the Temple. Though this issue does not receive nearly as much attention as the others

in his writings, those instances in which Paul does address the Temple are very telling of his view of its significance, and of the role of the Temple in the Christian community.

Paul refers to the temple of God several times, and this discussion occurs exclusively within the Corinthian correspondence.³³⁶ The first two instances of this come at 1 Corinthians 3:16-17. At 3:16, Paul reminds his followers that they ‘are God’s temple,’ and he repeats this at 3:17b: ‘For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are.’ The third instance of temple in this context occurs at 2 Corinthians 6:16, in which Paul again states that ‘we are the temple of the living God.’ He does not at any point identify this temple as the Jerusalem Temple, and with good reason; he is not referring to the Jerusalem Temple in any of these passages. The temple to which Paul refers is a new thing, one comprised of the faithful members of the Christian community, rather than the Jerusalem Temple.³³⁷ This is similar to the Qumran/Essene community’s approach to the Temple. As we saw, believing those in control of the Jerusalem Temple to be impure, and therefore to have corrupted the Temple, they withdrew from larger Jewish society and viewed themselves as the true Temple, holding to their own interpretation of purity law. But there are several key differences between the Qumran/Essene concept of the Temple, and Paul’s concept of the temple of God,

336. That is, his discussion of the temple of God occurs exclusively within the Corinthian correspondence. The noun ναός, ‘temple’, which appears only in reference to God’s temple, occurs four times in the undisputed Pauline epistles, and all in the Corinthian correspondence, at 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19 and 2 Cor. 6:16. At Romans 2:22, he writes briefly about pagan temples, using the word ἱεροσολέω, ‘to rob temples,’ which is derived from ἱερόν, a temple or holy place (LSJ).

337. Cf. David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 119–20 and Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 146–47. W.D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 1974), 185–88 notes that Paul ‘applies to the new community passages from the Old Testament applied to the tabernacle and to the future temple in the land...’, and that ‘[t]he Church is for Paul the fulfilment of the hopes of Judaism for the Temple: the presence of the Lord has moved from the Temple to the Church..., and the life of the church replaces the temple cult through its own spiritual sacrifices....’ He further notes that this idea ‘comes to full flower’ in the deuterio-Pauline Ephesians 2:21.

particularly in terms of the Qumran community's sense of hostility toward the Jerusalem Temple, or at least, toward those in charge of it. There is no sense in Paul's writings that he or his congregations were hostile toward the Jerusalem Temple. Indeed, Paul makes a collection for the saints located in Jerusalem, traditionally in and around the Temple, a central focus of his missionary activities (Gal. 2:10; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9; Rom. 15:25-27).

Jonathan Klawans suggests that, contrary to those who hold Paul has excised the Temple entirely from his Christ-following communities, Paul instead was attempting to 'infuse aspects of daily life with some of the holiness that pertained more directly to the temple.'³³⁸ He continues, positing that Paul was attempting 'to make a rather straightforward statement: "this too is divine service"';³³⁹ that is to say, the Temple retained a degree of holiness within the Pauline Christ-following communities, but other aspects of Christian life possessed and expressed a similar level of holiness. Through these Christian practices, then, those offerings traditionally made in the Temple were made outside of it. Klawans is correct in his observation that the Temple is not stripped of all importance in the Pauline epistles. However, Paul's diffusion of Temple sanctity to features of observance outside of the Temple does, effectively, remove focus from the Temple. By locating Temple-like practice outside the Temple, the importance of the Temple is diminished in such a way that it no longer holds pride of place in the identity formation and maintenance of the Pauline Christ-following community.

Another key difference between Paul's view of the Temple and the Qumranites' view of the Temple revolves around the location of the Temple, the land itself. Dunn's

338. Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 220.

339. Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice*, 221.

fourth pillar is not merely the Temple, but *land focused* in the Temple. The ‘land’ part of this pillar is of great importance; part of God’s covenant with his chosen people, Israel, was that they would have possession of the promised land of Canaan. This makes the location of God’s Temple, as built first under Solomon and later rebuilt during the Persian rule of the area, very important; God’s Temple must be in God’s promised land. This is reflected in the Qumran/Essene concept of Temple, which viewed the corruption of the physical Jerusalem Temple as an atrocity, and which thus led them to establish their own Temple of the faithful at a remove from the impure societal elements with Jerusalem, yet still within the land. Paul, however, places no such emphasis on the location of the temple of God within the promised land.³⁴⁰ Rather, Paul’s ‘temple of God’ is comprised of the members of the Christian community, and therefore is located wherever those faithful happen to be. Paul sees no need for Gentile believers to relate to the Temple in Jerusalem (other than in giving a collection for the poor Jewish believers there in the city), something which would become prevalent in Rabbinic Judaism only after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, and has simultaneously abandoned the belief of an earthly promised land which is representative of God’s election of His people. I will return to the issue of Christ-followers and a homeland in Paul’s letters in the next chapter.

Of Dunn’s four pillars of Judaism, then, there is only one to which Paul seems to adhere: monotheism, though given the role of the figure of Christ in Christian worship, even this is subject to some debate. As noted, the inclusion of Christ in reverent activities otherwise reserved only for God seems troublesome. However, Paul’s

340. W.D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 165–66 observes that ‘[t]he question whether the Lord had appeared to him within or outside the land did not, apparently, occur to [Paul], or was brushed aside as insignificant’, a break with the Judaism(s) of the first century, in which ‘the activity of the Holy Spirit was often deemed to be confined to the land.’

insistence that Christ is in the likeness of God, that he is the son of God, and that God acts through Christ, allows me to feel comfortable in stating that Pauline devotion to Christ still fits within a Jewish monotheistic tradition.³⁴¹ Similarly, there is only one portion of Sanders' pattern of common Judaism which Paul fits easily, this being the belief that atonement and election come from God. However, the vessel by which one accesses these advantages in the pattern of common Judaism is vastly different than that in Paul's thinking. In the pattern, atonement and election are gained through the law, while in Paul's new Christian community, these are gained through Christ. Even those instances in which Paul appears to be placing himself within the Jewish identity group are, when examined closely, inconclusive; a case may be made in either direction. Paul and his mainly gentile Christ-following congregations do display certain unquestionably Jewish boundary markers, while at the same time demonstrating that they do not adhere to all of those boundary markers. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that they do not follow several of the most essential identity features of ancient Judaism. This suggests that, while there is still a Jewish identity present in Paul and Pauline Christianity, there is an additional identity. Unlike the Jewish sects examined in the previous chapter, however, this identity is not within the Jewish identity group; it is something else. But it is possible that this 'something else' was not a new identity group; as noted in the previous chapters, a move within recent scholarship has suggested an understanding of the earliest Christ-following congregation, particularly the Pauline communities, as an example of the common Greco-Roman voluntary associations. With this in mind, we will briefly offer an examination of Paul and his congregations in terms of these voluntary

341. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 50, 151–53 calls this variation of Jewish monotheism a “binatarian” devotional pattern,’ noting that it is neither polytheistic nor ditheistic; rather, it is ‘cultic worship of Jesus in Pauline Christianity’ which is ‘offered in obedience to the God, and God “the Father” is given primacy.’

associations, so as to determine if such a comparison offers a satisfactory identification of the ‘something new’ present in Paul’s letters.

Excursus: Voluntary Associations

I pause here to offer a brief examination of a relatively recent trend in scholarship,³⁴² this being the suggestion that Jewish synagogues, Jewish sects, and the early Christ-following communities were, in fact, Greco-Roman voluntary associations. Given Josephus’ statements that he willingly chose to sample each of the major Jewish philosophies, and the clearly voluntary nature of early association with the Christ-following movement, this comparison is not without merit. However, despite some similarities, ultimately this comparison is found lacking in adequately describing the nature of one’s association with Jewish sub-groups or the early Christ-following movement.

Greco-Roman voluntary associations ‘represented a cultural institution integral to Hellenistic and Roman society.’³⁴³ These voluntary associations ‘are essentially phenomena of the Hellenistic period, of the urban centres and of the urban poor’,³⁴⁴ and

342. Much scholarship has emerged in the last two decades on this topic. See, e.g.: John S. Kloppenborg, “Collegia and *Thiasoi*: Issues in Function, Taxonomy and Membership,” in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson (London: Routledge, 1996), 16–30; Wayne O. McCready, “Ekklesia and Voluntary Associations,” in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson (London: Routledge, 1996), 59–73; Stephen G. Wilson, “Voluntary Associations: An Overview,” in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. John S. Koppenberg and Stephen G. Wilson (London: Routledge, 1996), 1–15; Richard S. Ascough, “Translocal Relationships Among Voluntary Associations and Early Christianity,” *J ECS* 5, no. 2 (1997): 223–41; and Richard S. Ascough, “Voluntary Associations and the Formation of Pauline Christian Communities: Overcoming the Objections,” in *Vereine, Synagogen und Gemeinden Im Kaiserzeitlichen Kleinasien*, ed. Andreas Gutsfeld and Dietrich-Alex Koch (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 149–83.

343. Kloppenborg, “Collegia and *Thiasoi*,” 17. He continues ‘The evidence [of these associations] is widespread. Inscriptions are extant from virtually every locale in the ancient world and from every period from the fourth century BCE to the later Roman Empire.’

344. Kloppenborg, “Collegia and *Thiasoi*,” 17.

‘involved people gathering and organising themselves into an extended family for purposes such as athletics, sacrificing to a god, eating a common meal, and regular socialising.’³⁴⁵ Kloppenborg suggests that these associations grew in prominence following the time of Alexander in large part to compensate for the weakening of the ties that bound a person to the *polis*, and such associations allowed members to participate in ‘social arrangements that would replace the older structures of the family, the *deme*, the tribe, and the *polis*.’³⁴⁶ These associations took many forms, were identified by a widely varied set of terms in ancient writings and inscriptions, and served a number of purposes in Greco-Roman society.³⁴⁷ Ultimately, Kloppenborg suggests that it is better to classify these associations ‘on the basis of their respective membership bases, rather than by their ostensible functions’, an approach which reveals three classifications: ‘those associated with a household, those formed around a common trade (and civic locale), and those formed around the cult of a deity.’³⁴⁸ Given Kloppenborg’s assessment that these associations arose to allow individuals to better negotiate their own place in and relationship to the larger Greco-Roman society, it is easy to see why he arrives at these classifications; each is centred around an important aspect of that society, and the associations served to reinforce the importance of those societal aspects and the place of the individual in them. Clearly, a sense of Greco-Roman group identity existed within the voluntary associations.

345. McCready, “Ekklesia and Voluntary Associations,” 61.

346. Kloppenborg, “Collegia and *Thiasoi*,” 17–18.

347. Cf. Stephen G. Wilson, “Voluntary Associations”, McCready, “Ekklesia and Voluntary Associations”, and Wendy Cotter, “The Collegia and Roman Law: State Restrictions on Voluntary Associations, 64 BCE–200 CE,” in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson (London/New York: Routledge, 1996), 74–89.

348. Kloppenborg, “Collegia and *Thiasoi*,” 26.

There is also a clear sense of these associations possessing their own unique group identities, as sub-groups of the larger society. Kloppenborg notes that ‘the association afforded each member a say in who joined the group and how the group was run, fellowship and conviviality, and perhaps the opportunity to become an officer or magistrate’, of which these last are goals to which most could never hope to aspire outside of the association.³⁴⁹ The first part of this observation is of particular note, as it indicates that membership in the association, while of a clearly voluntary nature, was not guaranteed. One had to obtain membership in a group that considered itself to be set apart in some way, and which required certain concessions of potential new members prior to initiation.

It is easy to see, then, why some scholars have seen such clear comparisons between these voluntary associations and the Jews and Christians of the turn of the era. There are many similarities between the Greco-Roman voluntary associations and the Jewish and Christian identity groups, and so there is much that may be said in favour of regarding Jewish synagogues and the first century Christian ἐκκλησίαι as voluntary associations. Of central importance to any understanding of these associations is the word ‘voluntary.’ These were not groups which one was forced to join, as in the case of military conscription, nor were they groups into which one was automatically admitted, as in the case of citizenship; being a citizen of Rome was not a voluntary association if one was born a citizen of Rome. This, of course, may also be said of the Christian communities; people were initially not born into them, or forced to convert. Similarly, the case of voluntary association within Judaism is comparable to that observed in Greco-Roman society. Membership in the various sects examined in Chapter 2 was

349. Kloppenborg, “Collegia and *Thiasoi*,” 17.

voluntary, as was association with a particular synagogue in many cases, and these associations are in fact sub-groups within a larger entity: Judaism.

In voluntary associations, ‘the primary emphasis was on social rather than business activities,’ though it was not uncommon for voluntary associations to have a professional aspect, and they typically ‘involved people gathering and organising themselves into an extended family for purposes such as athletics, sacrificing to a god, eating a common meal, and regular socialising,’³⁵⁰ all of which, with the exception of athletics, may be said of the Jews and the Christians. McCready also notes that such groups placed ‘emphasis on intimacy of membership...as well as respect for patrons and sponsors,’ and that they ‘included people from varied social levels and statuses.’³⁵¹ Based on this explanation, it is easy to see how scholars might include Jewish sub-groups and the early Christ-following communities as examples of voluntary associations in the first century.

It must be noted that not all scholars are convinced by this school of thought, particularly in terms of the Christ-following communities of the first century. In addition to the similarities, there are several key differences between voluntary associations and the Christian communities of the first century cited by opponents of the voluntary association comparison, such as: a ‘complete absence’ of common terminology between the two groups;³⁵² differences in the leadership structure of the Christian churches and voluntary associations;³⁵³ the multi-dimensional social status of early Christian

350. McCready, “Ekklesia and Voluntary Associations,” 61.

351. McCready, “Ekklesia and Voluntary Associations,” 62.

352. Cf. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 79 and James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Pr, 1999), 80.

353. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 79–80.

communities being far more all-encompassing than most voluntary associations;³⁵⁴ and, perhaps most telling, the fact that one joined the Christian communities to the exclusion of all other such associations.³⁵⁵

Richard Ascough, one of the most prolific proponents of the voluntary association analogy, has contributed a great deal of scholarship on the subject of early Christian groups as voluntary associations,³⁵⁶ and addresses several of these criticisms in his works. Ascough notes that ‘[t]he term ἐκκλησία is found in a few instances as a designator for voluntary associations,’³⁵⁷ and notes that the true oddity around the use of ἐκκλησία is that the Christians used it to describe themselves, rather than the expected συναγωγή.³⁵⁸ I will explore Paul’s use of ἐκκλησία in the following chapter. Additionally, Ascough points out that both ἐπίσκοπος and διάκονος, the words used by Paul in Philippians 1:1 to address the leaders of that congregation, both appear ‘frequently in classical writings,’³⁵⁹ and that both voluntary associations and Christian communities were ‘hierarchical in terms of patrons/leaders, and egalitarian in terms of general membership,’ suggesting that associations may have been more all-

354. Arland J. Hultgren, “The Church in the New Testament: Three Polarities in Discerning Its Identity,” *Dialog* 33, no. 2 (1994): 113.

355. Cf. McCready, “Ekklesia and Voluntary Associations,” 62 and Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 78.

356. See, for example, Richard S. Ascough, “The Thessalonian Christian Community as a Professional Voluntary Association,” *JBL* 119, no. 2 (2000): 311–28; Richard S. Ascough, “A Question of Death: Paul’s Community-Building Language in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18,” *JBL* 123, no. 3 (2004): 509–30; and Ascough, “Translocal Relationships”, among others.

357. Ascough, “Overcoming the Objections,” 159.

358. Ascough, “Overcoming the Objections,” 158–59.

359. Ascough, “Overcoming the Objections,” 164–65.

encompassing than is generally assumed.³⁶⁰ He also further points out that both voluntary associations and Christian communities engaged in cultic activities, and that some associations ('the exception to the rule,' in his words) engaged in moral guidance for members similar to that found in early Christian communities.³⁶¹ However, Ascough concedes that where 'one could belong to more than one' voluntary association, Christianity was an exclusive group; membership in the Christian community left no room for membership in any other.³⁶²

Despite Ascough's assertions, and those features which both Greco-Roman voluntary associations and Jewish and Christ-following groups unquestionably share in common, I find the comparison lacking. While these voluntary associations share many of the same boundary markers as the sects surveyed above (for example, religious worship, restricted membership, communal fellowship), there are many differences which distinguish these associations from the Jewish sects, and which suggest that Greco-Roman voluntary associations were fundamentally different. These differences are many: the sects above required singular membership, that is, once one became a member of the sect, all other such associations were disregarded in favour of the sect.³⁶³ Voluntary associations, on the other hand, allowed for multiple memberships to coexist. Many of the sects emphasised community closeness, signified best in obligatory meals (in some cases, every meal) with the community, from which non-members were

360. Ascough, "Thessalonian Christian Community," 314–15 and Ascough, "Overcoming the Objections," 169–71.

361. Ascough, "Thessalonian Christian Community," 323–24 and Ascough, "Overcoming the Objections," 171–76.

362. Ascough, "Overcoming the Objections," 171–76.

363. In the case of Josephus, it must be noted that while he sampled membership in several Jewish sects, ultimately he dedicated himself to one and only one of them, the Pharisees (*Life* 2.9-12).

excluded, while voluntary associations had ‘neither frequent...nor obligatory’ meals. And, perhaps the most distinguishing difference between the Jewish sects and voluntary associations is the sect’s rejection of society. This is not always, as we have seen, demonstrated in physical withdrawal from the world. It may be represented in what Wilson called ‘reformist’ sects, sects who believe that they, and they alone, worship in the proper way, and who seek, therefore, to reform society to their standards. In the case of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, this was the norm, while the Essenes/Qumran community represent the ‘introversionist’ form of the sect. This phenomenon was rare in Greco-Roman voluntary associations, which suggests a fundamental distinction between them and the Jewish sects of the first century CE.³⁶⁴

Similarly, as exemplified best by Ascough, attempts have been made to draw parallels between the early Christian movement, and particularly the Pauline Christian communities, and the Greco-Roman voluntary associations which were prevalent in antiquity. The purpose of this movement has been to attempt ‘to understand how discrete Jewish and Christian communities fitted into patterns of communal life already established in Graeco-Roman society.’³⁶⁵ As with the comparison of voluntary associations and Jewish sub-groups, however, the comparison between voluntary associations and the Pauline Christian communities falls short. In addition to a sense of exclusivity, that is, one was a member of the Christ-following community to the exclusion of other said communities, there is a distinct difference in the role each of these groups played in negotiating member relationships within a larger society. Greco-Roman voluntary associations provided members a place of social or professional

364. The question of voluntary associations as apt comparisons to emerging religious groups will be addressed again in the following chapter, with an emphasis on the comparison between such associations and the Christian community.

365. Stephen G. Wilson, “Voluntary Associations,” 1.

existence and interaction *within* the larger Greco-Roman society. Members of these groups were part of a Greco-Roman group identity, and their membership in a voluntary association was merely a further expression of that identity, rather than an expression of a new or different identity. In contrast, the Jewish and Christian communities did, unquestionably, exist within this same larger society, but they did not voluntarily join together in their unique religious worship in order to provide themselves a common place *within* that society. Rather, both Jewish and Christian groups saw themselves as being within but apart from society, as elect groups which were not truly part of the larger world in the same way non-members were. We observed in the previous chapter how members of the Jewish identity group viewed themselves as separate in several ways from the larger world, even while living within it. The same observation may be made of Paul and his Christian congregations at several points within his letters.

Pauline Christianity and ‘Something Else’

Given, then, that Paul and his congregations do not fit the mould of being a sect of Judaism, and that comparisons between these congregations and Greco-Roman voluntary associations reveals many more key differences than similarities, we are forced to conclude that Pauline Christianity was neither a Jewish sect nor a voluntary association. From this survey, we have observed that Paul uses several of the linguist terms associated, in ancient authors, with discussions of group identity. His usages are not, by and large, unexpected, and with only a few exceptions follow the patterns of use established in the LXX, and we have made several observations about Paul’s uses of each term. Perhaps most worthy of note is that none of these terms is used in Paul’s letters to refer directly to the Christian community, which at first would seem to imply that Paul did not regard the fledgling Christian church as an identifiable group of its

own. But what Paul does not state outright is implied at several points in the undisputed corpus. By using words which have clearly been established as referring to various identity groups in contrast with references to the Christian community, Paul has, sometimes indirectly, applied the vocabulary of group identity to the Christian communities of the first century.

Alongside this survey of the vocabulary of identity, we also find that while Paul the individual still displays some of these boundary markers unique to the Jewish identity group, many of these boundary markers appear to be absent within the Christ-following communities themselves. And when one examines the Pauline Christ-following communities in terms of those features common to all members of the Jewish identity group in the first century, through the works of Dunn and Sanders, we find that very few of these features play a role in Christ-following community identification. Rather, the Pauline Christ-following communities seem to exist partially within the Jewish identity group, and partially outside of it. We may observe several uniquely Christian boundary markers in Paul's letters, which serve to identify the Christ-followers as something related to, but not wholly within the Jewish identity group.

CHAPTER 4

A PAULINE CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

Our survey now comes to its culmination. Previously, we examined the way both modern and ancient authors have addressed issues of group identity formation, distinction and maintenance. From those modern authors surveyed, we adopted a set of criteria for determining the existence of, or membership in, various identity groups, these being: a common name by which to identify the group; a myth or myths of common ancestry which offers a sense of fictive kinship; shared historical memories, including the commemoration of past heroes and events; one or more elements of a common culture, including but not limited to religion, language, and various customs; a link with a homeland, whether that homeland is physically occupied by the group or not; and a sense of solidarity among group members. These six criteria have been the foundation of our examination, and have been used to highlight the ways in which those ancient authors and texts surveyed have addressed the issue of group identity formation and membership. We demonstrated that these criteria, in various combinations, were employed by ancient Greek and Jewish authors as they sought to form, distinguish and maintain their own identity groups. In this chapter, these six criteria will again be employed to examine the letters of Paul to his Christ-following communities, and to demonstrate that the Pauline Christ-following communities of the first century CE may, indeed, be accurately understood as a new, identifiable group. We will proceed through each criterion in the order presented above, beginning with a common name and concluding with a sense of solidarity. This order of address does not, in any way, imply the importance of any one criterion over another. The importance or emphasis placed on

each could vary greatly from person to person, group to group, year to year, depending on the situation. For the sake of familiarity and ease, however, the order presented by Hutchinson and Smith, and used throughout this work so far, will be maintained.

A brief note must be offered on the role of perspective in the Pauline epistles, and on the remainder of this study as well. It is clear from Paul's own writings that, in many instances, the communities to which he wrote acted in ways which Paul himself found to be incorrect, even (anachronistically) un-Christian (cf. Gal. 3; 1 Cor. 1:10-17; 5:9-13; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). This, then, makes it clear that not everyone in the communities in question shared Paul's views; as noted above, Paul himself notes something of a division within the Christ-following movement of the first century between his own communities and those of Peter (and James). Clearly, members of the communities of Peter or James would have probably viewed things rather differently than Paul. I mention this in order to make clear that the following examination of Christ-following boundary markers may not be applicable to, and even may not have been accepted by, all members of the Christ-following movement in the first century. The information available to us comes from a very specific source, the apostle Paul, who composed these letters from his own unique perspective. The identity markers observed within his writings, then, reflect Paul's own view of what marked out a Christ-follower, his own view of what the identity of a Christ-follower ought to be. Undoubtedly, if similar texts of Petrine authorship were to surface today, they would present a different perspective on Christ-following identity in the first century, one which follows Peter's view of what the identity of a Christ-follower ought to be. With this in mind, let us turn now to an examination of Christ-following identity markers as depicted in the Pauline epistles.

A Proper Name

The first criterion, a common, proper name for the group in question, seems rather obvious for the Christian communities founded by Paul. Indeed, the obvious answer appears in that statement: Christian. However, as noted previously in this study, use of the term ‘Christian,’ from the Greek Χριστιανός, to describe the Christ-followers of the first century CE is somewhat anachronistic. Although some scholars place the origin of the term Χριστιανός in the city of Antioch between 39-44 CE,³⁶⁶ this assumption is based primarily on the witness of Acts 11:26, which is the earliest known appearance of the word Χριστιανός (it appears a second time at Acts 26:28). There is only one other occurrence of the word in the New Testament, found at 1 Peter 4:16. And while Χριστιανός becomes frequent in later Christian texts,³⁶⁷ it does not appear a single time in the letters of Paul, the earliest New Testament texts. David Horrell notes that ‘[i]t has been long and uncontroversially established’ that Χριστιανός is adopted into Greek from the Latin *Christianus*,³⁶⁸ suggesting an origin among non-members in a manner similar to the origin for the word Ἰουδαῖος. There are several important occurrences of Χριστιανός/*Christianus* in early non-Christian sources, as well,³⁶⁹ though the earliest of these, as with Acts and 1 Peter, may be dated no earlier than the late first century CE.

366. See, for example, Adolf von Harnack, *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1905), 18; Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1909), 192; Marta Sordi, *The Christians and the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 1994), 15; Justin Taylor, “Why Were the Disciples First Called ‘Christians’ at Antioch? (Acts 11,26),” *Revue Biblique* 101 (1994): 94.

367. Notably those of Ignatius (*Eph.* 11.2; 14.2; *Magn.* 4.1; *Trail.* 6.1; *Rom.* 3.2; *Pol.* 7.3), as well as in 1 Peter 4:16, *Mart. Pol.* 3.2 and *Diogn.* 1.1; 2.6, 10; 4.6; 5.1; 6.1-9.

368. David Horrell, “The Label Χριστιανός: 1 Peter 4:16 and the Formation of Christian Identity,” *JBL* 126, no. 2 (2007): 362. Horrell provides an extensive list of scholarship on this point, which I will not reproduce here.

369. Notably, e.g., Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44; Suetonius, *Nero* 16.2; Pliny *Ep.* 10.96-97; and Josephus, *Ant.* 18.64.

Did Paul, then, have a name by which to address the communities of Christ-followers to which he wrote, given the complete lack of the title ‘Christian’ in his works?

Ἐκκλησία

One’s first instinct might be to turn to the Greek word Ἐκκλησία. In most modern translations of the New Testament, Ἐκκλησία is rendered by the English ‘church.’ This, however, is a uniquely Christian understanding of Ἐκκλησία. Prior to its usage in the New Testament corpus, Ἐκκλησία was used to describe an ‘assembly duly called’ (LSJ), that is, a political assembly; this is well attested in the works of Herodotus, Xenophon, Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle, among many others.³⁷⁰ Often it was used of the Greek δῆμος gathering to address matters of import to the people and the nation. Andrie du Toit has suggested that the ‘unmarked meaning of Ἐκκλησία in Greek is the *event* of ‘coming together,’³⁷¹ rather than the assembled body itself. In the Greek world, though, Ἐκκλησία ‘was never used in the Greek world as the *title* of a religious group.’³⁷² The use of Ἐκκλησία to refer to a specific assembled group, rather than to the act of assembly, only began to emerge in the LXX translations of the Hebrew Bible.

The use of Ἐκκλησία in the LXX depends primarily on the occurrences of the Hebrew word עֲדָתָא in the Hebrew Bible, which itself is rendered in English as ‘assembly’

370. Aristotle uses Ἐκκλησία to refer to meetings in Homeric times (*Pol.* 1285a). However, Roberts notes Ἐκκλησία is ‘lacking in Homer, Hesiod, and earlier writers,’ and that Aristotle’s use of the word in *Politics* is anachronistic. See J. W. Roberts, “The Meaning of Ekklesia in the New Testament,” *Restoration Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (1972): 30. Cf. Schmidt’s article in *TDNT*, vol. 3, 513–17.

371. Andrie du Toit, “*Paulus Oecumenicus*: Interculturality in the Shaping of Paul’s Theology,” *NTS* 55 (2009): 134.

372. Roy Bowen Ward, “Ekklesia: A Word Study,” *Restoration Quarterly* 2 (1958): 165. Ward goes on to note that around ‘the beginning of the first century, B.C., it [Ἐκκλησία] is found used in connection with a society of Tyrian merchants and shipowners in Delos which worshipped Heracles.’ However, Ward concludes that ‘here it is used only in its classical sense: the [event of] assembly or meeting of the society.’ Ward, “Ekklesia,” 165.

or ‘congregation.’ This, along with the Hebrew *קָהָל*, ‘congregation,’ is used to refer to the whole of Israel; the two terms are, in fact, somewhat interchangeable. However, while *קָהָל* generally refers to Israel ‘in the aggregate - even when settled in its home and villages scattered throughout the land,’ *קָהָל* ‘more frequently refers to the congregation in assembly or the act of assembling.’³⁷³ It is this sense, the active assembly of the people, that is carried into the LXX translations of *קָהָל*. Forms of *קָהָל* appear 162 times throughout the Hebrew Bible, and though it can be translated by other words in the Greek (including *συναγωγή*, which generally renders *קָהָל*), 69 of 77 occurrences of *ἐκκλησία* in the LXX translations are used to render *קָהָל*.³⁷⁴ It is easy to conclude, then, that *ἐκκλησία* in the LXX contains some aspect of the earlier Greek usage, describing the people in the act of assembly. It came to be associated primarily with the ‘desert assembly,’ that is, the people gathered together during the flight from Egypt.³⁷⁵ Many commentaries on the Pauline epistles also highlight the LXX use of *ἐκκλησία* as referring to the people gathered, generally, for religious purposes.³⁷⁶ However, despite the overtly religious connotations contained in the modern English translation of

373. Roberts, “Ekklesia,” 32.

374. *ἐκκλησία* does not render *קָהָל* at: Deut. 31:30; Josh 9:2; 1 Sam 19:20; 1 Chr. 28:2; 2 Chr. 10:3; Neh. 5:7; Ps. 26:12 (LXX 25:12); and 68:27 (LXX 67:27). Interestingly, *ἐκκλησία* does not appear in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus or Numbers, despite numerous appearances of *קָהָל*; *συναγωγή* renders many of these occurrences. Cf. Ward, “Ekklesia,” 165.

375. Cf. Lucien Cerfaux, *Theologie de l'Eglise Suivant Saint Paul*, trans. Geoffrey Webb and Adrian Walker (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons LTD, 1959), 101–05 and Roberts, “Ekklesia,” 32–33.

376. ‘It [*ἐκκλησία*] had been used in the LXX to refer to Israel as a gathered people...’, Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 31; ‘...the term was used in the LXX for the people of Israel’, Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 27; ‘...ekklesia...represented the Jewish assembly either as a liturgical body or, in more theological terms, as God’s people’, Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 38; ‘The word was also used in the LXX for the solemn gathering of the people of Israel as a religious assembly’, Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 70.

‘church’ and the primary association with the desert assembly, Ward suggests that neither עֵבֶד nor ἐκκλησία ‘ever meant anything other than the actual assembly, be it a religious assembly (as in most cases), the assembly gathered when David slew Goliath, an assembly of prophets, etc.’³⁷⁷ Given that the עֵבֶד is used of the whole of Israel even when dispersed to their own farms and villages, he does not see in עֵבֶד or ἐκκλησία in the LXX ‘a real sense in which the *ekklesia* exists whether assembled or not.’³⁷⁸ However, as du Toit notes, ‘in old Israel we cannot divide the religious from the political,’ and thus both עֵבֶד and עֵבֶד, and their respective Greek translations, ‘refer to the same assembly: the one being qualified from its divine perspective, the other from its ethnic composition.’ While this seems to disagree with the generalised view of ἐκκλησία in Ward and Roberts, du Toit is careful to note that a general ‘assembly’ can ‘become more specific’ within various contexts, citing the ἐκκλησία κυρίου and [πᾶσα] ἐκκλησία Ἰσραήλ specifically as being especially relevant.³⁷⁹ Du Toit observes that the phrase ‘ἐκκλησία κυρίου occurs seven times in the LXX (Deut 23:2, 3, 4 (*bis*), 9; Mic 2:5; 1 Chron 28:8...), while ἐκκλησία θεοῦ appears in Neh 13.1....’³⁸⁰ These more specific examples of ἐκκλησία do suggest some sense of a specific gathering. Notably, the passages from Deuteronomy and Nehemiah lay out criteria for entry into the ἐκκλησία, lending further support to du Toit’s observations. However, it is unclear from these passages whether the entry restrictions apply to membership within the community at large, as du Toit suggests,³⁸¹ or whether the restrictions apply to those who will gather

377. Ward, “Ekklesia,” 167.

378. Ward, “Ekklesia,” 168. Roberts, “Ekklesia,” 32 agrees.

379. du Toit, “Interculturality,” 134.

380. du Toit, “Interculturality,” 134–35.

381. du Toit, “Interculturality,” 135.

together in the act of assembly for a religious purpose. Ward's assertion that ἐκκλησία is not used as the title of a specific religious group or organisation is upheld in du Toit's observations of 'more specific' assemblies, which are not specific enough to remove all uncertainty regarding the referent.

Turning to later Jewish texts, du Toit notes that ἐκκλησία began to take on a sense of a local congregation, as opposed to the whole people gathered together. Using Ben Sirach as an example, du Toit observes several occurrences of the word ἐκκλησία (e.g., 15:5; 21:17; 38:33), though the religious undertones present at various points within the LXX are missing. Ben Sirach 'has the meeting of a Greek δῆμος in mind,' and thus, '[i]n most cases, ἐκκλησία...refers to political meetings.'³⁸² Further, du Toit states that 'almost all the instances of ἐκκλησία...indicate local assemblies,' rather than the assembly of the whole people for a specific purpose, though he is careful to point out that 'the local authorities were also a priestly aristocracy' at this time, and so it is difficult to differentiate from this context whether meetings were political, religious, or something else altogether.³⁸³ However, the ἐκκλησία-as-local congregation does not appear in 1 Maccabees, a text roughly contemporary with Ben Sirach. In 1 Macc., ἐκκλησία continues to refer to the desert assembly of Israel and to 'the Israelites called together for the consecration of the altar' at 3:13 and 4:59; συναγωγή is employed to refer to local congregations or specific groups within the people (e.g., the Hasidim at 2:42; the scribes at 7:12; the priests at 14:28).³⁸⁴ The works of Philo also suggest that

382. du Toit, "Interculturality," 136. He does note, however, that Sir. 50:13 and 20 use ἐκκλησία to describe 'a markedly cultic occasion.'

383. du Toit, "Interculturality," 136. Ward, "Ekklesia," 167–68, quoting Campbell, notes that 'there is at least a suggestion that successive meetings of the same group of people are really the same *ekklesia*....' Cf. J. Y. Campbell, "The Origin and Meaning of the Christian Use of the Word *EKKLESIA*," *JTS* 49 (1948): 132–33.

384. Cerfaux, *Theologie de l'Eglise*, 104–05.

ἐκκλησία maintained the sense of the whole people called together, rather than of local congregations or specific groups. Despite being contemporary with Paul, 19 of 23 of Philo's uses of ἐκκλησία are references to the LXX or to the desert assembly engaged in worship, while the remaining four describe an assembly in the classical Greek sense, the people coming together; only one of these instances refers to a local congregation.³⁸⁵ The works of Josephus, another Jewish author of the first century CE, employ ἐκκλησία 48 times, though his works, and his use of ἐκκλησία are so heavily Hellenized that there is no deviation from the Greek use of the word (cf. *Ant.* 11.172; 13.216; *War* 4.159; 7:412; *Life* 1:268).³⁸⁶

From this, it is clear that while ἐκκλησία could be and often was used of religious assemblies in the LXX, it did not carry with it a connotation of a religious group called ἐκκλησία at this time,³⁸⁷ and was frequently used of political assemblies, as

385. This at Virt. 108; du Toit, "Interculturality," 136–37; Cerfaux, *Theologie de l'Eglise*, 105. Cf. Peder Borgen, Ka*re Fuglseth, and Roald Skarsten, *The Philo Index: A Complete Word Index to the Writings of Philo of Alexandria* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 119. Ward, "Ekklesia," 168 erroneously states that Philo 'uses *ekklesia* 30 times.' The four passages in which ἐκκλησία does not reference, directly or indirectly, the LXX are: Abr 1:20; Spec 2:44; Prob 1:138; and Act 1:13.

386. Cf. Ward, "Ekklesia," 168 and du Toit, "Interculturality," 134. It is worth noting that 13 Josephan occurrences of ἐκκλησία appear in passages dealing with Moses and the Israelites in the desert, and several of these passages appear to refer to the whole people gathered together, that is, to the 'desert assembly.' Cf. *Ant.* 3:188, 300; 4:24, 35, 176 and 309, each of which portrays Moses gathering, presumably, the whole nation together εἰς (τὴν) ἐκκλησίαν.

387. It must be noted that Cerfaux, *Theologie de l'Eglise* places more emphasis on the religious nature of both לָקָח and ἐκκλησία, particularly when they appear outside the Pentateuch. He associates the occurrences in 1 and 2 Chron. and Neh. as denoting the assembly 'particularly insofar as it is concerned with the building and consecration of the temple...', or 'gathered together...for some religious reason....' He determines that ἐκκλησία is used to mean 'the assemblies at Jerusalem, in the temple, under the good kings, and in the community of Esdras and Nehemiah' (103). Cerfaux points also to the Greek Pslams, as well as Ecclesiasticus and 1 Macc, to emphasize 'the religious value of *ekklesia* even further,' ultimately concluding that the 'Old Testament usage...gave an aura of holiness to the *ekklesia* and an almost technical meaning of 'desert assembly', which 'deepens the idea of its sacred, liturgical functions.' However, Cerfaux does not address the issues raised by Ward, Roberts and du Toit regarding the difference between the people as an assembly for a particular purpose (religious, political, or other) and the people as an assembly at all times, even when not gathered together. While his points regarding the religious value of the ἐκκλησία in the LXX are valid, it is still difficult to claim that ἐκκλησία referred to a specific religious group in every instance.

well. While ἐκκλησία may seem like the most likely or appropriate candidate to serve as a proper name in Paul's letters for the Christ-following communities, such a case is difficult to make. Rather, as in contemporary Jewish literature, ἐκκλησία does not stand as the name for a specific group. Instead, we find in Paul's use of ἐκκλησία a clear sense that Paul saw the Christ-followers as belonging to an identifiable group, and that on several occasions he chose to describe this group with the word ἐκκλησία.

The word ἐκκλησία appears 44 times in the seven undisputed Pauline letters,³⁸⁸ and without exception, ἐκκλησία is used to refer to the Christ-following communities. Like the LXX use of the term, ἐκκλησία in Paul does not refer to the act of coming together, but of the group as the assembled body, wherever it exists. For these reasons, it has been observed that ἐκκλησία functions as 'almost a proper name' for the Christ-following communities.³⁸⁹ Additionally, special attention should be paid to the eight instances of the phrase ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ, 'the church of God,' in the undisputed corpus. While these make up only a small portion of the Pauline occurrences of ἐκκλησία, it is commonly held that 'wherever [ἐκκλησία] appears by itself..., [it] is to be understood as an abbreviation of the original term ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ. That is, the more precise designation... "of God" is to be assumed.'³⁹⁰ This observation suggests that those instances in which ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ appears in full are of special import in Paul's writings; if ἐκκλησία is always to be understood as an abbreviation of ἐκκλησία τοῦ

388. Once in Philemon; twice each in Philippians and 1 Thessalonians; three times in Galatians; five times in Romans; nine times in 2 Corinthians; and 22 times in 1 Corinthians. Cf. Roloff, *EDNT*, vol. 1, 411, which states that there are 46 occurrences 'in Paul's letters.' This count assumes 2 Thess. among the authentic Pauline epistles.

389. Schmidt, *TDNT*, vol. 3, 506.

390. Roloff, *EDNT*, vol. 1, 412. Cf. Ward, "Ekklesia," 170; du Toit, "Interculturality," 140; Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 32; Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 60; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 28.

θεοῦ, then only for reasons of emphasis or importance would we expect the full phrase to appear.

The remainder of this portion of the examination, then, will focus on these eight instances of ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ, to demonstrate that while this phrase does not adequately stand as a common name for the Christ-following identity group in Paul's letters, in the same way that Ἰουδαῖος or Ἕλλην might for the Jewish or Greek identity groups, respectively, it does highlight Paul's sense of the Christ-followers as an identifiable group which existed throughout the Mediterranean. Instances of the individual ἐκκλησία, that is, the word without the divine genitive attached, will also be examined, where doing so will offer further insight into the role of this term in identifying the Christ-following identity group. The majority of occurrences of ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ are to be found in the Corinthian correspondence, five in 1 Corinthians (1:2; 10:32; 11:16, 22; 15:9) and once in 2 Corinthians (1:1). Outside these epistles, there is one instance each in Galatians (1:13) and 1 Thessalonians (2:14), though instances of the individual ἐκκλησία occur in each of the seven undisputed letters.

The earliest instances of ἐκκλησία in Paul's letters, and thus in the New Testament, occur in 1 Thessalonians, at 1:1 and 2:14. As noted, the occurrence at 2:14 features the divine genitive; here, Paul praises the Thessalonian Christ-followers for becoming imitators τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ τῶν οὐσῶν ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, 'of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus.' This, however, is the second occurrence of ἐκκλησία in the epistle, and is notably different than that at 1 Thess. 1:1. In this opening passage, Paul addresses the letter τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ καὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ, 'to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and Jesus Christ.' These two verses have much in common: both use ἐκκλησία (singular at 1:1, plural at 2:14) to refer to the Christ-following community in

question; both locate the community geographically (in Thessalonica at 1:1, in Judea at 2:14); and both identify the community as being both ‘of God’ (2:14; ‘in God’ at 1:1) and ‘in Christ.’³⁹¹ However, it should be obvious that there is little consistency in these two passages. As noted, there are common elements, but notable differences as well. For example, the identification of the community as existing ‘in God the Father’ at 1:1 conveys a different sense than that of being ‘of God’ at 2:14,³⁹² and Paul does not include an identification of God as ‘Father’ at 2:14. Further, Paul’s use of the word ἐκκλησία is not consistent; though one may assume that identifying Christ-following communities as ἐκκλησία/ι ‘was by now (ca. CE 48) an already established practice among the early followers of Christ,’³⁹³ at one instance we find the singular and the other plural. If this term served as a proper name for the community, and every instance of ἐκκλησία represented an abbreviation of ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ, one would expect a consistent use of the word. That Paul can refer both to ‘the church’ and to ‘the churches’ seems problematic, but the wider context clearly indicates that he possesses some sense that there is no difference between a singular, local congregation and the wider Christ-

391. Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 92–98 sees this as Paul’s attempt to stress the unity of the entire Christ-following community, pressing into the minds of the Thessalonians that they are united ‘in Christ’ with any and all other Christ-following groups. The significance of the phrase ‘in Christ’ will be examined at the end of this chapter.

392. The addition of τοῦ θεοῦ has been taken as Paul’s attempt to distinguish the Christ-following communities, particularly those in Judea as at 1 Thess. 2:14, from Jewish congregations who might have understood the term ἐκκλησία as referring to themselves; cf. James Everett Frame, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 70 and Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 112. Cf. Cerfaux, *Theologie de l’Eglise*, 80–82 who suggests that Paul always adds the divine genitive when he is referring to the Christ-following congregations located in Judea. However, Paul’s presentation of ‘the Jews’ as persecutors of the Christ-following ἐκκλησία at 1 Thess. 2:13–16 makes it highly doubtful that Jews reading this would mistake the ἐκκλησία in question for their own communities.

393. Fee, *Thessalonians*, 14.

following body as a whole.³⁹⁴ At 1 Thess. 2:13-16, Paul is praising the Thessalonian gentile Christ-followers for their imitation of the Judean Christ-followers in enduring suffering, highlighting the interconnected nature of these two spatially disparate entities.³⁹⁵ While ἐκκλησία in these instances serves clearly to identify the Christ-following communities as a trans-local entity, it does not serve to *name* the community.

Similar issues of consistency occur in the Galatian epistle. In the opening of the letter, Paul address it ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῇ Γαλατίας, ‘to the churches of Galatia,’ and later describes how, prior to his conversion, he persecuted τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ‘the church of God.’ Again, we find an inconsistency in the number of ἐκκλησία within the text of Galatians itself, and between this instance of ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ and that from 1 Thessalonians; there, it was the plural, ‘the churches of God,’ while in the Galatians instance it is singular, ‘the church of God.’ It is clear that those referenced by Paul as being the targets of his persecution, whom he calls τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ³⁹⁶ are not the same Christ-followers to whom he now writes; the ἐκκλησία targeted by Paul existed (and probably still exists, at the time of the writing of 1 Thess.) in a different location. There is an implication that the targeted group is the Christ-following community (or communities) which existed in Judea, a fact emphasised by Paul’s comparison of the

394. Roloff, *EDNT*, vol. 2, 411 notes that ‘[t]he distinction between *congregation/church* (the body of Christians at a specific place...) and *Church* (the supra-congregational association of God’s people or the totality of all Christians...) is foreign to the NT. ...both the local assembly of Christians and the trans-local community of believers are equally legitimate forms of the ἐκκλησία created by God.’

395. Best, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 112–14 notes that the emphasis rests on the idea that, though physically separated, ‘Christ Jesus unites them. All are one in Christ....’ It must be noted, however, that not all scholars take this view of ἐκκλησία. Notably, James D.G. Dunn takes the term, regardless of qualifiers such as geographical locators or τοῦ θεοῦ, as always referring only to local communities, and not to a wider body of believers. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 2.887 and James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 58–59.

396. This terminology reflects the apostle Paul’s understanding of the community which he persecuted. The Pharisee Saul likely would not have described the Christ-following objects of his persecutory activities as ‘the assembly of God.’

Thessalonian Christ-followers with those in Judea. However, despite their difference in space and time, Paul applies the term ἐκκλησία to both the Christ-following communities in the region of Galatia and to those whom he persecuted elsewhere. For Paul, then, each local group was properly described as ἐκκλησία in their respective locales, while at the same time being part of and representing the larger body of believers, suggesting not only the existence of an identifiable Christ-following group, but also a sense of unity between members of that group.

This sense of unity among the various manifestations of the ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ is perhaps best observed in the Corinthian epistles, which contain the remaining occurrences of the phrase in the undisputed corpus. It appears five times in 1 Corinthians, at 1:2; 10:32; 11:16, 22; and 15:9, and a single time in 2 Corinthians, at 1:1. The occurrences at 1 Cor. 1:2 and 2 Cor. 1:1 are both addresses, similar to those seen in Gal. and 1 Thess., while 1 Cor. 10:32, 11:16 and 22 all represent an attempt on Paul's behalf to correct deviant behaviour in the Corinthian Christ-following community. 1 Cor. 15:9, the remaining instance of ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ, does not fit into either of these categories, but shares much in common with the instance of the phrase at Gal 1:13, and further demonstrates the trans-local view of the Christ-following communities present in the Pauline epistles.

At both 1 Cor. 1:2 and 2 Cor. 1:1, we find the only instances of ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ used as a form of address. As seen, in 1 Thess. and Gal., Paul addresses his writings to 'the church/es of/in' Thessalonica and Galatia, but he does not include the divine genitive in these addresses. Philemon 1:1-2 presents a similar use, in which Paul addresses the letter to Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and τῇ κατ' οἶκόν σου ἐκκλησίᾳ, 'the church in your house.' At both 1 Cor. 1:2 and 2 Cor. 1:1, Paul identifies his letter as being written τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ οὔσῃ ἐν Κορίνθῳ, 'the church of God which

exists in Corinth.’ That Paul would choose to address the Corinthian Christ-followers as the ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ in the opening of his letters, when he did not do so for others, is unexpected, but the context of the letters offers some insight into this choice. Throughout the Corinthian correspondence, Paul repeatedly addresses divisions within the Corinthian community, and urges unity and right behaviour by impressing upon the Corinthian Christ-followers a sense of belonging to a larger body of believers, described as the ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ. Paul envisages the ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ as meaning the entirety of the Christ-following community, regardless of their location, a community which is always present and united, even when not gathered together.³⁹⁷

The phrase ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ occurs more frequently in the Corinthian correspondence than in any of Paul’s other writings, precisely due to his desire to impress a sense of unity upon the Corinthians, and the instances of the phrase at 1 Cor. 10:32, 11:16 and 11:22 all demonstrate Paul’s appeal to the larger Christ-following identity group as a model of behaviour for the Corinthian manifestation of that entity.³⁹⁸ These occurrences of ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ all serve as behaviour correcting passages, as they all deal with how the Corinthian Christ-followers are or are not to behave. While the nature of the Corinthian Christ-followers’ misbehaviour is of import, it lies outside the scope of this examination. Rather, our concern lies with the use of ἐκκλησία τοῦ

397. Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 32 states that the church ‘which exists in Corinth is...the church of God, wanting in nothing save numbers.’ Hans Conzelmann and James W. Leitch, trans., *1 Corinthians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 22 similarly concludes that ‘the church manifests itself in the individual congregation,’ while Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 60 suggests that ‘the local church is the anticipatory manifestation...of the gathered, end-time people of God.’

398. So Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 32: ‘It [the church at Corinth] cannot afford to neglect other similar manifestations of the whole church...and must take note of universal Christian beliefs and practices...’; cf. Conzelmann and Leitch, *1 Corinthians*, 22, Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 27, Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 60, Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 132–33.

θεοῦ in these instances, and how this use contributes to an understanding of the phrase as referring to the Christ-following group as an identifiable entity.

In the previous chapter, we briefly examined 1 Cor. 10:32, noting Paul's use of terms from the vocabulary of group identity, specifically Ἰουδαίοις and Ἑλλήσιν, Jews and Greeks, respectively. There, we noted Paul's injunction to the Corinthian community to 'give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ,' to the church of God. At its most basic level, this is simply Paul's way of encouraging the community members at Corinth to maintain good relations with one another, so as not to cause rifts in the already tumultuous group.³⁹⁹ However, by placing 'the church of God' as a term equivalent to the very loaded terms 'Jews' and 'Greeks,' and by placing 'the church of God' in a position of contrast to these two existing groups, Paul has stated that there is a new identity group in the world, which is characterised as being the church of God.⁴⁰⁰

An understanding of ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ as referring to a trans-local identity group finds further support at 1 Cor. 11:16 and 22. In the first of these, 11:16, Paul writes regarding the practice of women covering their heads while praying or attending worship services, and, presumably speaking to Corinthian Christ-followers who have gone with uncovered heads, states that 'neither we nor αἱ ἐκκλησίαι τοῦ θεοῦ, the churches of God, hold such a custom,' that is, no other Christian communities allow for uncovered heads in those situations. Thus the Corinthians, as members of this wider group, should not either. Paul, here, is appealing not only to his own authority as an

399. Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 489 observes that Paul 'is urging on them [the Corinthians] the very conduct for which they were judging him: to the Jew as a Jew, to the Greek as a Greek, and to the church of God as loving a brother or sister.'

400. Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 244–45 also observes that Christians are a 'third group' here, and Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 795 notes that 'the church of God' is a partial redefinition of 'the people of God,' which now includes non-Jews as well.

apostle and founder of the Corinthian community, but to the practice of the wider body of Christ-followers, the plural ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ.⁴⁰¹ And the same may be said of 11:22, in which Paul chastises Corinthian Christ-followers for acting in a way that makes them seem as if they ‘despise the ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ,’ because they eat separately and do not enjoy a common, ritual meal together; I will discuss this meal in more detail below. As in 11:16, the phrase is here employed to remind the Corinthian Christ-followers of the larger body of believers, of which they are one small part.

However, in these verses we again find an inconsistency in the use of the term ἐκκλησία. At 10:32 and 11:22, Paul writes about the singular church of God, while at 11:16, he refers to the plural churches of God, further demonstrating the ‘almost’ status of the term as a proper name for the Christ-following group. It seems clear that ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ has not developed into a proper name for the Christ-following group for Paul. However, Paul’s constant appeal to the larger body of believers in his corrective statements to the Corinthians, a body of which the Corinthian Christ-followers are a part, couple with Paul’s juxtaposition of the ἐκκλησία as a group alongside Jews and Greeks, serves to emphasise Paul’s view of the Christ-following community as an identifiable group in the Mediterranean world.

As noted, the most likely candidate for a name for the Christ-following identity group would be ἐκκλησία, or ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ. But this is not the only term by which Paul identifies the community. Throughout his letters, he employs myriad terms and phrases to refer to the Christ-followers, another inconsistency which suggests that

401. Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 258 notes that the plural is ‘Paul’s most common way of referring to the totality of God’s people, though occasionally he uses the singular in this sense.’ Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 530, though not an advocate of a universal sense in every instance, here observes that it is likely that ‘Paul is...reminding the Corinthians of how much greater a body it is to which he and they belong.’ Cf. note 33.

neither ἐκκλησία nor any other term served as a common, proper name for the Christ-followers in Paul's thinking.

Other Identifying Terms

Perhaps the most common form of group identification employed by Paul, after ἐκκλησία, is the term ἅγιος, a word which primarily means 'holy,' but is often used in Paul with the sense of 'saints,' that is 'God's people' (LSJ). He describes the Christ-followers as 'saints' at several points in his letters, and even uses it as a form of address similar to that of ἐκκλησία. At Phil. 1:1, Paul addresses the letter πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Φιλίπποις, 'to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi.' This bears many similarities to the addresses which described the community as ἐκκλησία: it serves to identify which part of the community is being addressed (those 'in Philippi'); it identifies the community in question through a religious term ('saints'); and it draws a connection between the Christ-followers in Philippi and those who exist elsewhere (all of whom are 'in Christ'). Paul even uses this language alongside ἐκκλησία on occasion. At 1 Cor. 14:33, Paul instructs the Corinthian women to keep silent, as is done ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων, 'in all the churches of the saints.' And at 2 Cor. 1:1, the full address of the letter 'to the church of God which is at Corinth' includes τοῖς ἁγίοις πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ 'all the saints in all Achaia.'

Elsewhere, we find other terms used to identify the Christ-following communities. At Rom. 1:7, Paul addresses his letter πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ, 'to all the beloved of God in Rome,' while 1 Cor. 1:2 finds a lengthy elaboration on 'the church of God which is at Corinth' in the further identification of those in this group as being ἡγιασμένοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, κλητοῖς ἁγίοις, 'sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.' Paul goes on to include πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐπικαλουμένοις τὸ

ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν παντί τόπῳ, ‘all those in every place who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ’ as part of his address, providing yet another (and extensive) possible identifier for the community. And at both 2 Cor. 5:17 and Gal. 6:15, Paul refers to the Christ-following group as a καινὴ κτίσις, a ‘new creation,’ an identifier which further contributes to Paul’s conception of the Christ-following group as a ‘new’ identifiable entity.

As with ἐκκλησία, the instances of these group identifiers are not used frequently or consistently enough to be adequately considered a proper name. Regardless, the fact that Paul can use these various identifiers to describe the group in question, and that in several instances he does so in such a way as to portray the Christ-following group as an identifiable entity alongside Jews and Greeks, clearly indicate that Paul did see the community as a unique and identifiable body. Further, his repeated appeals to imitation and harmony between spatially disparate groups also demonstrates his sense of a wider community, one present in various locations and yet still connected, local representations of a larger whole.

The first criterion of group boundary identification, then, is not present in the Pauline letters. While various terms are used to identify the communities in question throughout the letters, there is no one term or phrase which can be said to serve as a common, proper name for the Christ-following identity group. Further, this lack of a common proper name for the group seems to serve no purpose in the Social Identity Theory as put forth by Esler; a name provides community members a means by which easily to identify themselves to outsiders, fulfilling the cognitive dimension, that is, the simple recognition of belonging to the group in question, of Social Identity Theory. However, the use of these terms provides a clear indication that Paul did perceive an identifiable Christ-following group, one which possessed unique boundary markers

which served to identify membership in the group. It must also be noted that though there may have been no equivalent of the later martyr statement *Sum Christianus* at this time, it remains clear that Paul views the Christ-following communities as an identifiable entity, and thus we may presume that the members of his congregations shared (or were supposed to share) this view. And though a lack of a proper name falls short of fulfilling the cognitive dimension, the nature of those terms which were variously applied to the Christ-following communities in the Pauline epistles does play a role in the evaluative dimension of Social identity theory, which grants positive and negative connotations to belonging to the group in question. That each of the terms seen in Paul's writing speaks directly to the chosen, holy nature of the community unquestionably represents a positive connotation to belonging to this group.

For the remainder of this examination, we will continue to explore these Christ-following boundary markers in Paul's letters, and the ways in which they served to identify group members as Christ-followers. I will also use the transliterated, italicised 'ekklesia,' and the adjectival 'ekklesial,' when referring to the group in question; though ἐκκλησία does not stand as a proper name for the community, it is clear that Paul did think of the Christ-following identity group as being an ἐκκλησία, an assembly or a congregation. Thus, 'ekklesia' will be used to mean the Christ-following community as a whole, trans-local entity

Fictive Kinship and Community

Kinship relationships, simply put, 'were the strongest bonds in antiquity.'⁴⁰² It should not be surprising, then, that Paul would appeal to an imagined form of these

402. David Rhoads, "Children of Abraham, Children of God: Metaphorical Kinship in Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 31, no. 4 (2004): 285. Esler, "Keeping It in the Family," 151, makes a similar observation, writing: 'The dominant institution is kinship and although

bonds to help construct a group identity between persons who were not related. The application of kinship to persons who are unrelated ‘by virtue of the principles...of descent or marriage’⁴⁰³ is termed ‘fictive’ kinship, precisely because it describes a kinship relationship that is not, in biological terms, ‘real.’ The use of the term ‘fictive’ is not intended in any way to denigrate the sense of kinship shared between persons in certain communities who are not related biologically or by marriage; this bond is an important and valuable part of such groups. However, it is important to highlight the ‘fictive’ or ‘constructed’ nature of the kinship bonds of such groups, including the Christian community, in discussing the formation and maintenance of the community.

John Barclay notes that ‘for those who were converted from a Gentile background, belief in Christ caused a fundamental rupture with their ‘ancestral customs’, abruptly and offensively breaking that religious tradition’ which had been made part of their life from an early age through familial education; he also notes that Jewish converts may have experienced a similar rupture, though in many cases this would have been to a lesser degree than their Gentile counterparts.⁴⁰⁴ To counter this rupture and loss with ‘ancestral customs’ passed on through family, Paul goes to great lengths to construct a familial relationship between the members of his and other Christ-following communities, in an effort to bring them together as a group and to provide converts a new familial relationship.⁴⁰⁵ As Caroline Hodge notes, ‘[f]or Paul, kinship and ethnicity

other groups, including village or town, trade association, army unit and so on exist and can be significant, the basic social distinction in the society is between kin and non-kin.’

403. So Julian Pitt-Rivers in his entry on ‘Pseudo-Kinship,’ listed under kinship, in David L. Sills, ed., *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan/Free Press, 1968), 408.

404. John M.G. Barclay, “Family as the Bearer of Religion,” 73.

405. John M.G. Barclay, “Family as the Bearer of Religion,” 73 also notes that Paul does not stress the need for Christ-followers to live in households comprised solely of other Christ-followers. He writes: ‘Paul indicates the existence of Christians in mixed households...and encourages them to make the

cannot be merely metaphorical, for lineage, paternity, and peoplehood are the salient categories for describing one's status before the God of Israel.'⁴⁰⁶ Paul's intention in using this language was to create a kinship relationship that was unique to the Christ-following group. This is accomplished in Paul's letters in two primary ways. First, through his use of kinship terms in addressing the Christ-followers, Paul implies that they are all members of one family, of which God is the patriarch and in which Jesus is their brother. Second, Paul subsumes the Abrahamic covenant from Judaism by redefining the criteria by which one gains membership in the covenantal promise, and argues that the Christ-followers are now descendants of Abraham, and therefore children of God's promise, further strengthening the sense of fictive kinship between members of the communities, and serving to identify them in a unique manner.

We will begin by examining some of the language employed by Paul in constructing a sense of kinship for the Christ-following communities under God the Patriarch, and then turn our examination to Paul's discussions of Abrahamic descent. In so doing, we will demonstrate that Paul is attempting to construct a new kinship identity for members of the Christ-following communities to which he writes, and that this kinship group serves to further mark out the Christ-following communities as an identifiable group.

In examining the language of fictive kinship in Paul's letters, we turn again to their opening verses. In the initial chapters of his epistles, we find an example of a

best of their present situation' (cf. 1 Cor. 7:12-16), and that Paul's 'Christian message embraced *individuals*, who were bound together...in a new metaphorical family as brothers and sisters in Christ, but did not necessarily live, and were not required to live, within the solidarity of a 'Christian family'.' Barclay observes that 'the first time in Christian literature that instructions are given about the Christian socialisation of children' (76) occurs at Eph. 6:4, but this lies outside the focus of this examination.

406. Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4–5.

pattern of familial construction which is designed to present a kinship group which originates from God, as the father of Paul, of various believers, and of Jesus, and which then places the addressed community of Christ-followers within that family group, as brothers of Paul, various believers and Jesus. Taking 1 Thessalonians as an example, we find Paul immediately identifying the Thessalonian Christ-followers as being members of, as we saw earlier, the *ekklesia* of the Thessalonians. He further identifies this church of the Thessalonians as being located ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ καὶ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ, ‘in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ’ (v.1). By locating the Thessalonian community ‘in God the Father,’ Paul begins the earliest of his letters with an implication of kinship between believers, with God in the role of patriarch; this ‘is not an attempt to define their [Jesus and God’s] mutual relationship as in later Trinitarian discussion but to indicate God’s relation to men...’⁴⁰⁷ He further highlights this kinship group, and particularly God’s patriarchy, at v.3, stating that he, Timothy and Silvanus all remember the Thessalonians ‘before our God and πατρὸς ἡμῶν,’ our Father. The phrase ‘our Father’ appears only 14 times in the undisputed corpus, and at least once in each of the seven epistles; though it is rare, this indicates that Paul’s use of ‘our Father’ is ‘quite significant’⁴⁰⁸ as a kinship constructor. This phrase establishes a clear familial connection between Paul, Silvanus, Timothy, the Thessalonians, and all Christ-followers, all of whom exist in a familial relationship to God as patriarch. In Esler’s opinion, the use of ‘our Father’ ‘underlines the fact that ‘father’ is not simply a title [for God]...or a means of describing his relationship to Jesus (as in Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3 and 1:31), but that God’s fatherhood is an essential feature of how Paul’s addressees

407. Best, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 63; cf. Esler, “Keeping It in the Family,” 162–63.

408. Esler, “Keeping It in the Family,” 168.

encounter him.⁴⁰⁹ And if any doubt about the familial relationship between believers still remained, it is removed at v.4 when Paul identifies the Thessalonian Christ-followers as ἀδελφοί, brothers, highlighting a connection which exists between members of the Christ-following communities.⁴¹⁰ Later, in v.10, Paul identifies Jesus as God's son, placing the Christ-followers in Thessalonica in a fraternal relationship to Christ in this new family, and '[t]hus, the object of brotherhood is shared' among the members of the *ekklesia*, regardless of their actual blood relationships.⁴¹¹

This pattern of kinship construction can also be found in the opening verses of the remaining undisputed Pauline epistles: Paul identifies God as πατήρ, usually of Paul himself and other believers (Gal. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2, 3; Phil. 1:2; Phlm. 1:3; Rom. 1:7); he then calls the addressees of the letter ἀδελφός, identifying them as members of a family, and implying that God is also their Father (Gal. 1:3-4; 1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 1:8; Phil. 1:12; Phlm. 1:7; Rom. 1:13); and in some instances, this family connection is furthered by identifying Jesus as God's son, and therefore the brother of the faithful (Gal 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:2-3; 19; Rom. 1:3, 4, 9). This pattern of kinship construction is but one example of Paul's efforts to delineate a family group comprised of the Christ-followers. Leaving aside Paul's use of ἀδελφός for the moment, we find that through his use of πατήρ, υἱός and τέκνον Paul further solidifies the Christ-followers as members of a kinship group, presenting them as possessing a familial

409. Esler, "Keeping It in the Family," 167–68.

410. Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 31, 41 observes that the term 'brother' is 'a common one among Christians.... It is true that it represents the correct relationship between Christians who in Christ Jesus are all sons of the Father..., and that use of the term was common in both Jewish and Greco-Roman religious groups. Cf. David G. Horrell, "From ἀδελφοί to οἶκος θεοῦ: Social Transformation in Pauline Christianity," *JBL* 120, no. 2 (2001): 299, who observes that 112 occurrences of ἀδελφός in the Pauline corpus refer to fellow Christ-followers. The single remaining occurrence, at Rom. 9:3, refers to the biological people of Israel.

411. David M. Bossman, "Paul's Fictive Kinship Movement," *BTB* 26, no. 4 (1996): 169.

relationship with Paul, as being descendants of Abraham, and ultimately, as being sons and heirs of God.

In addition to calling the Christ-followers of his communities ‘brothers’ or ‘brethren,’ time and time again, Paul also refers to fellow Christ-followers as ‘children,’ often placing himself in a parental role and further highlighting the familial relationship these communities felt, or were supposed to feel, for one another. Most often, Paul uses this formula to place himself in a parental role over an entire community of Christ-followers, as in 1 Thess. In both instances of his parental self-presentation in this letter, Paul describes his missionary and teaching activity among the Thessalonians as being ‘gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children’ (2:7)⁴¹² and how ‘like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you’ (2:11).⁴¹³ A similar theme may be observed at 1 Cor. 4:14. Here again, Paul refers to the Christ-followers (this time of Corinth) as his children, but again he does so in order to instruct the congregants in proper behaviour, as would a parent with a child. At 1 Cor. 4:14, Paul, in the middle of railing against the practices of the Corinthian community, writes that he does not do so ‘to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as

412. Note a significant textual variant here. The NA 27 offers ἀλλὰ ἐγενήθημεν νήπιοι ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν, which would correctly be rendered ‘but we were made as children among you.’ There is significant evidence for a reading of this verse with ἡπιοι, gentle, in the place of νήπιοι, which would provide a translation as ‘but we were made gentle among you.’ Given the following clause, which identifies Paul as acting as ‘a nurse taking care of her children,’ it seems logical that ἡπιοι is the correct reading. However, textual evidence supports the NA 27 and USB 4’s reading of νήπιοι.

413. Both of these instances reflect an important element of Paul’s role as a parental figure to these communities; he is not presenting himself here as a figure of authority. Rather, as evidenced in the language employed, Paul describes himself as ‘gentle’ (see previous note), and as having ‘encouraged’ the Thessalonian Christ-followers, rather than having coerced or cajoled them into something against their will. Bossmann, “Fictive Kinship,” 164–65 notes that Paul’s ‘role of father’ is therefore ‘one of instruction, encouragement and reinforcement rather than one that is authoritative, powerful, or punitive.’ However, Paul does present himself in an authoritative role elsewhere (cf. 1 Cor. 4:15). But the question of whether Paul wants his Christ-following converts to view him as a gentle or stern parental figure is unimportant to this study; it is only important here that Paul does present himself as a parental figure.

my beloved children,' placing himself in a role similar to that found in 1 Thess., that of a nurturing teacher. This is not to say, however, that Paul does not call his congregations 'children' in an angry tone. At 2 Cor. 6:13, in frustration, Paul instructs the Corinthians to 'widen your hearts,' and laments that he speaks 'as to children,' clearly placing himself in a parental, or at least adult, position over them. Similarly, at Gal. 4:19, Paul calls the Galatian Christ-followers 'my little children,' and laments that he will be 'in travail' with them 'until Christ be formed in you.'⁴¹⁴ In both instances, Paul is seeking to correct behaviour that flies against what he has taught the Christ-followers in their respective locations, and to reiterate and then to encourage what he considers to be correct practice among them. 2 Cor. 6:13 and Gal. 4:19, then, both offer further examples of Paul as a parental figure to the 'children' that make up his Christ-following communities, an 'analogy [which] must have been of some importance to Paul, as he uses it so frequently' (e.g., 1 Thess. 2:5-12; Gal. 4:19; 1 Cor. 3:1-3a; 4:14-16; 2 Cor. 6:11-13; 12:14).⁴¹⁵ Bengt Holmberg notes that Paul's exhortation for his communities to

414. It must be noted that this is the second example seen so far of Paul employing *maternal* parental imagery in describing his relationship with the Christ-followers of his communities. Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007) notes that these texts, and many others which find Paul referring to himself as a maternal figure to the Christ-followers, have been 'too long neglected' (5). Gaventa makes several interesting observations about the role of maternal imagery in the Pauline epistles. She notes that 'these passages involve complex metaphorical moves' (5) on the part of Paul and his listeners, metaphors which are intended to alter the community's view of just what it means 'to be in Christ' (27); this perhaps sheds interesting new light on Paul's claim that 'there is not male and female' in Christ (Gal. 3:28). Perhaps most intriguing of her views on maternal imagery is the claim that it 'appears in contexts referring to the ongoing nature of the relationship between Paul and the congregations he founded; paternal imagery, by contrast, regularly refers to the initial stage of Christian preaching and conversion.' (6) This is particularly applicable to 1 Thess. 2:7 (26-27), 1 Cor. 3:1-2 (45), and Gal. 4:19, which she rightly calls 'the most complex of these passages,' noting that 'Paul remains in labor, not until the child is born, but until Christ is born in the child' (6; she later situates this text in terms of Paul's efforts 'to identify [his] apostolic work with the apocalyptic expectation of the whole created order; 31). While much more could be said regarding the maternal versus paternal imagery in Paul's kinship construction, the focus of this study remains the formation of identity groups, and thus the important aspect of both maternal and paternal imagery lies in the fact that it is parental, that Paul is placing himself in a familial relationship with his converts.

415. Bengt Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1978), 79.

imitate him also stems from the parent-child relationship, and observes that such exhortations occur only in letters to communities founded by Paul, namely, Galatia, Thessalonica, Philippi and Corinth; in Holmberg's words, these are churches which Paul 'had founded or brought to life himself.'⁴¹⁶

We also find three instances of Paul referring to individual Christ-followers as his 'children.' Two of these refer to Timothy, Paul's companion. Timothy is described as Paul's 'beloved and faithful child in the Lord' (1 Cor. 4:17), and his worth is credited to him 'as a child with a father' (Phil. 2:22) in his service to Paul in spreading the word of Christ. Paul also describes the runaway slave, Onesimus, as 'my child, whose father I have become in my imprisonment' (Phlm. 1:10). Each of these instances also reflects Paul's place as a parental figure; Timothy is praised for assisting Paul in spreading the gospel and is held up as an example of proper Christ-following behaviour for the congregations to which Paul writes, while it is implied that Onesimus was converted by Paul, and therefore that Paul instructed Onesimus in the ways of Christ. A further implication is that Paul also instructed and converted Philemon, and that Paul is therefore Philemon's father in faith, as well. But Paul does not instruct Philemon on how to treat Onesimus. Rather, he asks him to treat the returned slave as he might a fellow Christ-follower, as a brother.

There are two other instances in which Paul refers to 'children' outside the context of the Christ-followers being 'children of God.' At 1 Cor 7:14, Paul describes the holy status of the children of believers, revealing that even one Christ-following parent provides consecration for a non-believing spouse, and any children born of their union. In this instance, Paul is not working to create a kinship relationship between otherwise unrelated persons, but is instead referring to actual kinship relationships, and

416. Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 80.

their status within the Christ-following community. The final instance of the word ‘children’ appearing in Paul’s letters outside the ‘children of God’ concept occurs at Rom. 9:7. Here, Paul is describing the *ekklesia* as the children of Abraham and, as children of Abraham, also children of God, an idea which proves to be crucial to Paul’s fictive kinship construction; by redefining the lineage of Abraham, Paul places both Jewish and Gentile converts to the Christ-following movement within an identifiable group of their own, the *ekklesia*.

In describing the Christ-followers as the children of Abraham, Paul moves away from the vocabulary laid out above, preferring instead to characterise his reinterpretation of Abrahamic descent with the word ‘descendant.’ In this argument, Paul makes the case that being a physical, that is, biological or ethnic descendant of Abraham does not necessarily make one a child of Abraham. This is obvious, given the example of Hagar and Ishmael who, though a physical descendant of Abraham, does not share in the covenant made with Abraham and passed down through his child, Isaac. It is interesting to note that, despite the importance that a new understanding of Abrahamic descent has for Paul and the first century Christ-following communities, Paul’s discussion of Abraham and his descendants is almost exclusively found in only two letters, Galatians and Romans. The only instances of the descendants of Abraham or children of God discussion outside of these two epistles occur in 2 Corinthians and Philippians. In arguing that his opponents have no more authority than he does, Paul states that he is also a descendant of Abraham (2 Cor. 11:22), and in encouraging proper behaviour among the Philippian Christ-followers, Paul states that they should be ‘children of God without blemish’ (Phil. 2:15).

Turning to Galatians 3 and 4, we find the earliest iteration⁴¹⁷ of Paul's arguments regarding the Christ-followers' position as part of the Abrahamic covenant. The foundation of this argument is the faith of the Christ-followers; Gal. 3 begins with Paul chastising the Galatian Christ-followers for turning away from the gospel which Paul had preached to them, in favour of that preached by others which advocated full Torah observance as a requirement to be a Christ-follower. God's covenant with Abraham, Paul argues, was issued prior to Abraham taking up any aspects of the Law, based solely on Abraham's faith in God; 'thus Abraham "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness"' (Gal. 3:6) and therefore 'it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham' (3:7). This point is reiterated again at 3:9: 'those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith.' Paul's focus in laying out this argument in such a way is that the Abrahamic covenant, in which God foretold that his descendants would be many and blessed, was given in promise, and not under the Law. To this end, Christ is identified as the 'one' offspring of Abraham (3:16), making Christ heir to the covenant of Abraham through faith. It is interesting to note that for Paul here the emphasis on Christ as Abrahamic heir focuses not on Christ as a law-abiding Jew, but on the faith of Abraham. The law 'came four hundred and thirty years' (3:17) after God first made his covenant with Abraham and Abraham's offspring, making the entry requirement for the covenant Abraham's faith and not the Torah, because, 'if the inheritance [of the covenant] is by the law, it is no longer by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise' (3:18). The focus of this argument is, clearly, to legitimise the

417. This does not assume an early date for the writing of Galatians. Various proposed dates for the writing of Galatians range from as early as 48-49 CE to as late as 57-58 CE. Cf. James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 8; Betz, *Galatians*, 12; Martyn, *Galatians*, 20; and many others. However, of the two letters in which Paul offers lengthy discussions of the Christ-followers' place in the Abraham covenant, Romans is commonly accepted to have been written sometime after Galatians.

Gentile converts among the Christ-following communities of Galatia.⁴¹⁸ All persons of faith, regardless of their ethno-religious backgrounds prior to entering the Christ-following community, are ‘one in Christ,’ and if they belong to Christ then they are ‘Abraham’s offspring’ and ‘heirs according to promise’ (3:27-29).

But, having discussed at length the status of Gentile converts, Paul does not ignore the place of Jewish converts, those ‘under the law,’ in this new constructed kinship group. Gal. 4 builds upon the theme of the Christ-followers’ place as ‘heirs according to promise,’ and incorporates those who lived under the law as well. He states that ‘God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons’ (Gal. 4:4-5), and that ‘if a son, then an heir’ (4:7) to the covenant; ‘god’s (*sic*) paternity extends from Jesus to his disciples by adoption. Thus, Jesus as Son extends the father’s family to those who were under the law and thus deemed ‘slaves’ or ‘servants.’⁴¹⁹ Hodge suggests that ‘[t]he adoption of the gentiles incorporates a new people into an already existing kin group,’⁴²⁰ and she concludes that Paul ‘fashions an aggregate’ identity out of the *Ioudaioi* and *ethnē*, the Jews and the Gentile.⁴²¹ However, it is interesting that Paul would feel the need to express that those born under the law, that is, Jews, were not already part of the covenant inheritance of Abraham.⁴²² Indeed, Paul includes himself as one of ‘those who were under the law,’ referring to his life ‘in Judaism,’ discussed elsewhere, and therefore

418. Cf. F. F. Bruce, *Galatians*, 152–53, Betz, *Galatians*, 141–43, and James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 159–62.

419. Bossman, “Fictive Kinship,” 166.

420. Hodge, *If Sons*, 77.

421. Hodge, *If Sons*, 177.

422. So Betz, *Galatians*, 207–08.

including himself as one of those who received ‘adoption.’ However, we saw in Gal. 3 that Paul redefined Abrahamic kinship as being determined by faith, just as the covenant was granted to Abraham because of his faith prior to the law. Those born ‘under the law,’ who reckoned righteousness by Torah, were not true heirs to the covenant. Only through the faith of Abraham, and of his one descendant Christ, is one able to inherit the covenant promises of Abraham.⁴²³ To this end, Paul has constructed a new kinship group of Abrahamic descent, based around faith, rather than around the Torah of the Mosaic covenant. In such a way, Paul creates a kinship identity which is intended to take precedence over any previous kinship identities which converts may have had, whether from the Gentile or Jewish worlds.

Paul employs a similar argument in Romans 4, wherein he redefines the idea of being a descendant of Abraham in order to place the Christ-followers in the line of Abrahamic succession. In describing to the Roman community of Christ-followers his views on circumcision, Paul points out that God’s covenant with Abraham, that covenant which promised righteousness and the inheritance of the world to Abraham’s descendants, was made ‘not after, but before he was circumcised’ (Rom. 4:10), and circumcision is identified as a sign of the faith Abraham had while still uncircumcised (4:11). The purpose of this, according to Paul, was to make Abraham ‘the father of all who believe without being circumcised’ (4:11) and thus share in the righteousness granted by faith, and also to make him ‘the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but also follow the example of the faith which our father Abraham had before he was circumcised’ (4:12). Here again, Paul specifically cites both Jewish and Gentile converts as being made sons of Abraham through Christ,⁴²⁴ rather than accepting

423. Cf. James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 216–17.

424. Cf. Jewett, *Romans*, 318.

the Jewish converts because they were already sons of Abraham. The promise that Abraham's descendants would 'be his heir to the world' (4:13) did not come through the Law, and therefore Torah observance alone cannot guarantee such a promise. Only those who were circumcised and also shared in faith were the children of Abraham, because 'if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is empty' and the promise which Abraham received because of his faith 'is abolished' (4:14). The Abrahamic covenant must depend on faith 'in order that the promise may...be guaranteed to all his [Abraham's] descendants.' Thus, Abraham 'is the father of us all' (4:16), that is, the father of all those who believe.⁴²⁵ Here again, we find Paul placing the Christ-followers into a new family group, one which has different entrance criteria than any from which the Christ-followers may have come, and which is to be preferred by group members.

Paul has gone to great effort in these chapters to accomplish two things. First, he is redefining Abrahamic descent to a faith based kinship group, changing the requirements to be a son of Abraham from Torah observance or biological descent to faith in Christ. This redefinition also functions within the evaluative dimension of Social Identity Theory, offering positive connotations to members of the Christ-following communities. By portraying community members as part of a kinship group with God as the patriarch, Paul levels the playing field between Jewish and Gentile converts, while simultaneously offering the positive note that through their faith in Christ all members of the community are heirs to the promise of God.

And second, Paul is creating a place within this new faith-based kinship group for both Gentile and Jewish converts to the Christ-following community, one which is intended to supplant, or possibly replace their old kinship communities. By levelling the playing field, so to speak, between Jewish and Gentile converts, Paul intends to create a

425. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 216–17.

unified community, which functions within the emotional dimension, which refers to member attitudes toward both insiders and outsiders, of Social Identity Theory. In both instances, Paul's efforts toward constructing a fictive kinship for the Christ-followers serve both to reinforce the positive connotations of belonging to the Christ-following community and to reinforce the desired unity amongst members.

But Abraham's role in Paul's discourse, and in his formation of a Christ-following identity group, is not restricted simply to his covenant or lineage. Abraham also serves a function in the third criterion of group identification, shared historical memories for the community. But the third criterion is not limited to past heroes; it also encompasses the occurrence and remembrance of past events, as well as the commemoration of these heroes or events within the community in question. For the Christ-following communities to whom Paul wrote his letters, we find several events from the past which Paul highlights as important historical occurrences for the *ekklesia*, such as the suffering, crucifixion and, especially, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The following section of this examination will focus on these heroes and events, and Paul's presentation of them as things worthy of remembrance and imitation among the intended recipients of his letters. In so doing, Paul adopts and creates elements of a shared history for the Christ-following communities, in order to provide them with a deeper sense of belonging to the nascent Christ-following movement.

Ekklesial Memories

As with the preceding discussion of Abrahamic descent in Paul's writings, our examination of Paul's presentation of Abraham as an historical figure present in the shared memories of the Christ-following community will focus almost entirely on the Galatian and Roman epistles. But while the previous section focused on Paul's

redefinition of Abrahamic descent, and thus the redefinition of covenantal inheritance, here our discussion will focus on the manner in which Paul holds Abraham as an example to be followed. This will involve examining several of the same verses as above, though with the intention of highlighting different aspects of Paul's presentation.

There are, in fact, only two instances outside of the Roman and Galatian correspondences in which Paul refers, directly or indirectly, to Abraham, at 2 Cor. 11:22 and Phil. 3:5. The instance at 2 Cor. 11:22 was discussed above in terms of Paul's equal claim to Abrahamic descent as his opponents in Corinth, and so need not be elaborated upon further here. That at Phil. 3:5 falls into much the same category, and was discussed at some length previously (see Chapter 3). Paul, in defending his position against his opponents, lays out his 'Hebrew credentials,' so to speak, and thus highlights his claim to Abrahamic descent by identifying himself as coming from 'the tribe of Benjamin,' the great-grandson of Abraham. However, this verse also represents an appeal to Abrahamic descent, rather than Paul's presentation of Abraham and his children as figures worthy of esteem. A similarly constructed verse occurs at Rom. 11:1, wherein Paul again states that he is 'an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.' This, as with 2 Cor. 11:22 and Phil. 3:5, represents an appeal to Abrahamic lineage, rather than an attempt to uphold Abraham as an important figure in the history of the *ekklesia*. Thus, there is no need to address these passages further here.

Paul's first mention of Abraham appears in the letter to the Galatians, and the manner in which Abraham is introduced is telling of his place in Paul's thinking. At Gal. 3:6, Paul, referencing the Old Testament, states that 'Abraham "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."' Immediately upon introducing the figure of Abraham into his argument, Paul highlights the righteousness of Abraham's faith.⁴²⁶ In

426. F. F. Bruce, *Galatians*, 152–53; Betz, *Galatians*, 141 notes the importance of Abraham's faith in Jewish tradition, while James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 159–62 offers the interesting observation that

the following verse, Paul concludes that ‘it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham’ (Gal. 3:7), and this, coupled with the arguments discussed above regarding the place of Christ-followers in the inheritance of the Abrahamic covenant, serves to encourage the Christ-followers to follow Abraham’s example of faith.⁴²⁷ This sentiment is reiterated at 3:9, which states that ‘those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith;’ this ‘must be taken to mean those of the Gentiles who believe like Abraham.’⁴²⁸ Indeed, of the eight verses in which Abraham is named in Galatians, all but three also contain the word ‘faith’ linked in some way to the Patriarch (cf. Gal. 3:6, 7, 8, 9, and 14). Of the three outlying occurrences, two fall into the category of Abrahamic descent. Gal. 3:16, discussed above, identifies Jesus as the ‘one’ offspring of Abraham, while 4:22 begins the allegory of Abraham’s two sons, one by a slave and one by a free woman. The remaining mention of Abraham, at 3:18, does not contain the word πίστις, faith, but it does describe the inheritance given to Abraham by God as being δι’ ἐπαγγελίας, ‘by a promise.’ As discussed above, that promise was given to Abraham because of his faith. The key feature of Abraham for Paul, then, is his faith in obeying God, exemplified in nearly every instance where Abraham is mentioned in Galatians, and for this reason he is an important figure in the history of the chosen community, which for Paul is made up of those who share Abraham’s faith.

The epistle to the Romans presents an identical portrayal of Abraham, again highlighting his importance to the Christ-following communities because of his faith. Though much of the Abrahamic discussion found in Romans, primarily in chapter 4,

traditional Jewish understanding of Abraham praised him for his ‘faithfulness’ in obeying God’s command to sacrifice Isaac, while Paul suggests that Abraham’s faith relates to his believing prior to the advent of the Torah.

427. James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 162.

428. Betz, *Galatians*, 143; cf. F. F. Bruce, *Galatians*, 157.

centres around the place of the Christ-followers as the descendants and heirs of Abraham's covenant, we find Paul again emphasising Abraham as an important figure in the history of the *ekklesia*. Unlike Galatians, Paul does not immediately introduce Abraham as a paragon of faith. Rather, Paul introduces Abraham by identifying him as the ancestor of the Christ-following community, and noting that 'if Abraham was justified by works [of the Law], he has something to boast about, but not before God' (Rom. 4:1-2). Paul then reveals Abraham's importance for the Christ-followers, offering a phrase identical to Gal. 3:6 (and citing the Old Testament) at 4:3: 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.'⁴²⁹ This is restated at 4:9, and, as in Galatians, in nearly all of the remaining verses which contain the name 'Abraham' in Romans, the word 'faith' also appears (cf. 4:12, 13, 16). Of the outlying verses, Rom. 11:1 has already been discussed, while Rom. 9:7 alludes to the promise given Abraham because of his faith, referencing Isaac as the source of the multitude of Abraham's descendants. Having spent the latter portion of Rom. 4 describing Isaac as the son of the promise (cf. Gal. 4:28: 'Now we, brothers, like Isaac are children of promise.'), it is likely that Paul is here emphasising the role of Isaac as a reminder of the rewards of Abraham's faith.⁴³⁰

But the historical memories Paul ascribes to the Christ-following community are not restricted to figures from the ancient past. Paul also holds up two events from the recent past as important parts of the history of the *ekklesia*, in which Jesus is central,

429. 'Thus in the end it is Abraham's Christlike virtue of "faithfulness" that...proves redemptive...': Jewett, *Romans*, 308.

430. Cf. James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 256. Matera, *Galatians*, 171 sees this as a reference to the 'extraordinary circumstances' in which both Isaac and the Galatian communities were begotten, an indirect reference to the rewards of faith.

namely, His suffering, crucifixion and death,⁴³¹ and His resurrection from the dead. These are events which are not only to be remembered for their significance to the Christ-following movement, but which are also in many ways to be hoped for by members of the community. However, though these events are separated by, traditionally, a three day period, they are presented in Paul as inextricably linked together; without His suffering and death on the cross, Christ cannot be raised from the dead or conquer sin, while without the resurrection, Christ's suffering and death on the cross grant no benefit. As such, our examination will deal with these two events together whenever possible.

In one of the earliest of Paul's letters, 1 Thessalonians, neither the crucifixion nor the resurrection seem to receive much attention. It may be assumed, then, that Paul did not feel the situation in Thessalonica required exhortations based around either of these two events. Whatever his reasoning in not emphasising them, though, both the death of Jesus and his resurrection do receive mention in 1 Thessalonians. The only direct reference to the crucifixion or death of Jesus in this letter comes at 2:14-15, wherein Paul states that 'the Jews...killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets....' This verse, however, does not highlight the importance of Jesus' death; it merely reports that He died, and ascribes the blame for his death to 'the Jews.'⁴³²

431. Later in this chapter, I will examine the role of suffering and persecution as a defining element of Christ-following culture in Paul's letters. During this examination, several verses will be highlighted which refer to the 'suffering' of Jesus which, of course, includes the crucifixion. However, I will treat these verses separately from those discussing the crucifixion, as the latter refers to a specific event which has significance, and the former is used to encompass all manner of suffering, including but not exclusively crucifixion.

432. There is much debate over the authenticity of this passage, primarily in light of Paul's negative portrayal of 'the Jews' here, something unseen anywhere else in the undisputed corpus. This point will be addressed again below, in this examination's treatment of persecution as an element of Christian culture, but I will here point briefly to Hurd, "Paul Ahead of His Time", in which he addresses this issue.

While the death of Christ receives only a cursory mention in 1 Thessalonians,⁴³³ the first hints of the importance of Christ's resurrection emerge in the epistle. At 1 Thess. 1:10, Paul identifies Jesus as God's 'Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the coming wrath.' This at first seems relatively unremarkable, reading more as a description of what God did rather than a statement about the importance of the resurrection in the lives of the Christ-followers. However, there is an implication that Jesus is the one 'who delivers us' precisely *because* he has been raised from the dead.⁴³⁴ The resurrection is addressed again later in the epistle: 'For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep...and the dead in Christ will rise first' (4:14-16). Here, then, we find Paul illuminating the importance of the resurrection of Christ, because it is through Christ that the faithful members of the Christ-following movement shall in turn receive resurrection.⁴³⁵

Galatians is the first letter to stress the importance of Christ's suffering, crucifixion and death, while the resurrection is referred to only briefly. This occurs at the very beginning of the epistle, when Paul identifies himself as 'an apostle neither from men nor through men, but through Jesus Christ and God the father, who raised Him from the dead' (Gal. 1:1); it also features at 2:20 (see below). This was not an uncommon belief in contemporary Judaism. However, Paul's own Damascus road experience with the risen Christ moved him beyond the belief that God *would* raise the dead to the belief that God had begun to do so.⁴³⁶ Reminiscent of the resurrection mentioned at 1 Thess.

433. The crucifixion, though implied here, is not directly mentioned in 1 Thessalonians.

434. Cf. Best, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 84–86.

435. Cf. Best, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 186–97.

436. F. F. Bruce, *Galatians*, 73.

1:10, this Galatian reference also carries with it an implication of the importance of the resurrection. This reference stands primarily as an example of God's power, and represents the 'only qualifying or defining clause' referring to God; for Paul, God is not only the creator, but the re-creator of death.⁴³⁷ However, Paul does not elaborate on the importance of the resurrection in the Galatians epistle by itself, instead focusing on the suffering, crucifixion and death of Christ and their relationship to the resurrection.

The first mention of the crucifixion of Christ in Paul's letters comes at Gal. 2:19-20, along with the second occurrence of the resurrection in Galatians. Here, Paul states that he 'died to the law, in order that I might live to God,' and this death came about because 'I have been crucified with Christ' (2:19). By associating this metaphorical death with the crucifixion of Christ, Paul has identified the crucifixion as the end of his previous life, a theme brought up previously in the Galatians epistle.⁴³⁸ Of course, Paul does not literally mean that the actual moment of Christ's crucifixion is the moment his previous life ended and his new life began; Christ's actual death and Paul's conversion are separated by a substantial period of time. Rather, the crucifixion here represents Paul's conversion, his acceptance of the role of Jesus in the salvation of mankind through His death on the cross, and the beginning of a new life. The crucifixion, or rather one's acceptance of Jesus' role, is meant to be a turning point for the Christ-followers as well. As with the resurrection, here the crucifixion is presented as something to which the *ekklesia* should aspire; though important, this point will be discussed further below, during our examination of the role of persecution as an element of a Christian culture. Paul goes on to state that, following his being 'crucified with

437. James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 28.

438. James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 143 identifies this as 'the first note of a characteristic Pauline theme, which sees the transition of believing in Christ as a dying which results in a different kind of living.' Cf. F. F. Bruce, *Galatians*, 144 and Betz, *Galatians*, 123.

Christ,’ ‘I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me,’ and that he now lives a life ‘in the flesh,’ that is, an earthly life, but one that is ‘in the faith of’ Jesus, ‘who gave himself up for me’ (2:20). It is striking that both verses 19 and 20 end with a reference to the death of Christ,⁴³⁹ and that both instances refer to the transformative power of that death; because Christ gave himself up and was raised to life, and because Paul has accepted and thus shares in His crucifixion and resurrection, Paul is transformed.⁴⁴⁰

There are five other instances in Galatians where Paul makes reference to the transformative nature of the crucifixion. Three of these refer directly to the crucifixion and what it represents, stating that ‘those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desire’ (5:24), and that he will not glory in anything ‘except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world’ (6:14). In both of these instances, Paul points to the transformation of an earthly presence (the flesh; the world) by the power of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross and the Christ-followers’ share in this suffering.⁴⁴¹ The crucifixion and death of Christ, then, represent an important event in the history of the *ekklesia*, one that not only plays a role in beginning their new lives in the *ekklesia*, but which also transforms their very nature, and their interaction with the world around them.

The third direct crucifixion reference, at 3:1, does not directly address the transformative nature of the crucifixion, but does imply such a thing: ‘O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was set forth publicly

439. The NA27 Greek text ends verse 19 with the statement Χριστῷ συνεσταύρομαι, I have been crucified with Christ. Many modern translations, RSV and NIV included, place this clause at the beginning of verse 20; the NRSV follows the Greek verse structure.

440. Betz, *Galatians*, 123: Christ now lives in the transformed Paul, and the transformed members of the *ekklesia*; cf. James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 145–46.

441. James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 314; Betz, *Galatians*, 289.

as having been crucified?’ By referencing the crucifixion of Christ after the pronouncement that the Galatians have been ‘bewitched’ into following a false teaching, Paul is highlighting the transformation which had occurred within the Galatian communities and was now in danger of being lost, as they had received the gospel of the crucified Christ on Paul’s previous visit.⁴⁴² Placing the crucifixion at the end of the verse lays an emphasis on that event as the source of this transformation, and further highlights the importance of the crucifixion in the historical memory of the *ekklesia* for Paul.

The remaining two instances in Galatians deal with the suffering of Christ specifically in terms of the crucifixion, though they do not refer to the act of Christ being crucified itself. Rather, they refer either to ‘the cross’ (5:11), or to ‘the cross of Christ’ (6:12).

The first of these two verses, 5:11, is perhaps one of the most confusing passages in the Pauline letters. The full text of the verse reads: ‘But if I yet preach circumcision, brothers, why am I still persecuted? Thus the stumbling-block of the cross has been removed.’ On first read, it appears that Paul is admitting to preaching the need for Christ-followers to be circumcised, something which goes against his writings in several places, not least of which occurs in the bulk of the Galatians epistle leading up to 5:11. For most of this letter, Paul devalues the need for Gentile circumcision, noting that those who receive circumcision are bound by the whole law and severed from Christ. There are many possible theories as to the reason behind this passage. Dunn offers a summary of these proposed theories, ultimately deciding that the theory that Paul preached the lack of circumcision to the Gentiles but still preached circumcision to the Jews is the

442. Betz, *Galatians*, 131–32.

most plausible,⁴⁴³ which lends credence to the Timothy episode reported in Acts 16:3. However, this runs counter to Paul's thinking, and his writing. Throughout his letters, Paul devalues the importance of circumcision, stressing that Gentiles need not receive circumcision to join in the Christ-following community, and that Jews having received circumcision are not granted an exalted station in the promises of God; circumcision is, in the words of Bruce, 'neither here nor there'⁴⁴⁴ in Paul's construction of a new identity group. Bruce in fact suggests alternative, and in my opinion, more plausible possibilities as to the origin of this verse. The two primary theories here are that either Paul's stance on circumcision following his conversion were not widely known amongst his opponents, as Paul's conversion and theology were relatively recent (in history), and had only been expressed to the so-called 'pillars' in Jerusalem at a private meeting,⁴⁴⁵ and that Paul recognised that Jewish Christian believers could continue to live as Jews and practise circumcision in accordance with the pattern of the Jewish mission led by Peter.⁴⁴⁶ This is applied to the Timothy episode, which would have appeared as if Paul said one thing on circumcision to the Gentiles, and another to the Jews.

Paul himself addresses this issue by asking why, if he did indeed 'still preach circumcision,' was he being persecuted for preaching non-circumcision? The question is a valid point, particularly if his opponents were attempting to show that he was inconsistent in his teachings on circumcision; if Paul did indeed preach circumcision to some, his opponents would have no ground on which to question him on this point. In

443. James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 278–80.

444. F. F. Bruce, *Galatians*, 236.

445. F. F. Bruce, *Galatians*, 236; cf. Howard *Crisis* 10, 39, 44.

446. F. F. Bruce, *Galatians*, 237, states that Paul allowed circumcision for 'sociological convenience, not religious validity.'

Paul's own words, 'the stumbling block of the cross,' that is, the stumbling-block presented by the circumcision-free Gospel which Paul taught, 'has been removed' if, indeed, Paul did preach circumcision; there would, then, be no issue. The 'cross,' here, again represents the transformation which Christ-followers undergo in their acceptance of Jesus and their conversion to the *ekklesia*.⁴⁴⁷ And the same may be said of 6:12, which presents a similar argument.

In what appears to be a direct reference to the opponents of 5:11, those claiming that Paul still preaches circumcision while simultaneously attacking him for preaching a circumcision-free Gospel, Gal. 6:12 reads: 'Many who wish to make a good showing in the flesh encourage you to be circumcised, only so that they are not persecuted for the cross of Christ.' Again, Paul presents his circumcision-free Gospel as the cause of persecution faced 'for the cross of Christ,' which we can safely assume came from 'Jews or Christian Jews' who believed that Gentile converts must adhere to Torah.⁴⁴⁸ As at 5:11, the cross of Christ here represents the transformed nature of the Christ-followers' relationship with the physical world and their previous ways of life, because all things have now been reprioritized in Christ. Paul's opponents, at this verse, are described as holding to the physical identity marker of a previous life, circumcision, merely as a way to avoid facing the same type of persecution which Paul himself, having accepted the transformation of the cross of Christ and thus having preached a circumcision-free Gospel, has faced.⁴⁴⁹

Unlike the role of Abraham as an historical figure in the life of the *ekklesia*, Paul's presentation of the crucifixion and resurrection as historical memories of shared

447. F. F. Bruce, *Galatians*, 269.

448. So James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 336–37.

449. Betz, *Galatians*, 314–16.

importance are not limited to two letters. Reference to these two events, and their crucial role in the theology of the Christ-following movement, appear in all of the undisputed Pauline letters, save Philemon. And in each of them, both the crucifixion and the resurrection are presented as important events in the history of the *ekklesia*, as transformative events and as things to which the community should aspire.

The Corinthian correspondence deals extensively with the crucifixion of Christ, primarily within the first chapter of 1 Corinthians. Paul is careful to state that the crucifixion is through Christ, presumably because the Corinthian Christ-followers profoundly misunderstood Paul's gospel. His questions of 'Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptised in the name of Paul' (1 Cor. 1:13) suggest that the Corinthians divided into groups based on who baptised them.⁴⁵⁰ This, however, was in error, something Paul is quick to point out; 1:14-16 list those few members of the Corinthian community whom Paul baptised, before he concludes that 'Christ did not send me to baptise but to preach the gospel...lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power' (1:17). The importance of baptism is downplayed here, with Paul's emphasis resting on the requirement that he preach the gospel,⁴⁵¹ the power of which stems from the crucifixion which brought it into the world.⁴⁵² As before, 'the cross of Christ' here represents the transformative power of Christ's crucifixion for the *ekklesia*, something which would be removed if the Corinthians continued to erroneously ascribe their salvation to Paul in some way. The transformative power of the cross for the *ekklesia* is stated outright in the following verse: 'For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God' (1:18), which is perhaps the most direct

450. For further discussion on baptism as a cultural event, see below.

451. Cf. Conzelmann and Leitch, *1 Corinthians*, 37.

452. Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 49.

statement in Paul's letters regarding the importance of the crucifixion. While the 'word of the cross' is generally understood as the gospel which Paul preaches, this gospel came into the world through the crucifixion of Christ.⁴⁵³

In Galatians, we saw that Paul referred to the crucifixion as a 'stumbling-block.' At 1 Cor 1:23, he returns to this idea, stating that 'we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.' While the crucifixion in Christian theology is important for all mankind, Paul understands that only members of the *ekklesia* grasp this importance. He presents the crucifixion not only as an important historical memory for the *ekklesia*, but as an identifying feature of 'those who are called,' that is, the *ekklesia*, one which marks them out from both the 'Jews' and the 'Gentiles,' that is, the rest of the world.⁴⁵⁴

The transformative power of the crucifixion in the history and lives of the *ekklesia*, and the role this event plays in identifying members of the *ekklesia* from other communities around them, is highlighted further in the remaining occurrences of the event in the Corinthian correspondence. In discussing the foundation of the *ekklesia* in Corinth, Paul notes that he knew 'nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified' (2:2); this is echoed later at 2 Cor. 13:4, in which Paul presents Christ as being crucified 'in weakness,' but through this crucifixion he is resurrected and 'lives by the power of God.'

That the transformative power of the crucifixion should hold such a primary place in Paul's preaching activities further emphasises the importance of this event for the *ekklesia*. This is also one which non-members would fail to understand, like the 'rulers of this age' who did not understand the key role that Christ played in the

453. Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 51; Conzelmann and Leitch, *1 Corinthians*, 42.

454. Conzelmann and Leitch, *1 Corinthians*, 47; Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 54–56.

salvation of mankind, ‘for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory’ (1 Cor. 2:8).

While the crucifixion receives much attention in the Corinthian correspondence, the resurrection receives less of an emphasis. This discussion occurs almost entirely in 1 Cor. 15, with several instances in 2 Corinthians; both of these letters emphasise the importance of the resurrection for the *ekklesia*, and urge the Christ-followers to look forward to their own resurrection through Christ.

The discussion throughout 1 Cor. 15 is targeted at an element within the Corinthian *ekklesia* which was apparently teaching that there was no resurrection of the dead (15:12). Whether this was members of the *ekklesia* itself or outsiders who came and taught among the community is unclear. Regardless, Paul states over and over that if Christ has not been raised, then none of the *ekklesia* will be raised, and therefore, the entirety of Paul’s preaching has been both in vain and an affront to God (15:12-17). However, for Paul this, of course, is not the case;⁴⁵⁵ Christ was in fact raised from the dead (15:20) and thus brought the resurrection to the *ekklesia* (15:21), so that all members of the community will receive eternal life (15:42). This is echoed in each mention of the resurrection in 2 Corinthians. At 4:14, Paul states emphatically that ‘he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also...and bring us...into his presence.’ Paul further notes that Jesus died and was raised ‘so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them’ (2 Cor. 5:15), that is, for Christ. And while Christ is the focus of the resurrection event, it is only ‘by the power of God’ (2 Cor. 13:4) that Christ was raised, and thus that the community might live eternally. Thus, Paul has placed the resurrection at both ends of the *ekklesia*’s history, as

455. Cf. Conzelmann and Leitch, *1 Corinthians*, 265–66.

an event in their history which helped to usher in the creation of the *ekklesia*, and as an event which will occur at the end of the earthly lives of the *ekklesia*.

The Philippian correspondence features references to both the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ, as well. Paul praises Christ for His ‘obedience unto death, even death on a cross’ (2:8), and notes that ‘many...live as enemies of the cross of Christ’ (3:18). In both of these passages, as in the earlier letters, the crucifixion is portrayed as a transformative event, one which changes both the people who believe in Christ and their relationship to the world outside the *ekklesia*. The resurrection, similarly, is presented both as an important event in the history of the *ekklesia*, and something to which the community should look forward. Paul expresses his desire to ‘know [Christ] and the power of his resurrection’ and to ‘share His sufferings, becoming like him in death’ (3:10), in order to ‘attain the resurrection from the dead’ (3:11). Here, Paul has inextricably linked the resurrection to the suffering, crucifixion and death of Christ; to achieve the former, one must experience the latter in one’s own life as a member of the *ekklesia*. As mentioned previously, the role of suffering as a fulfilment of the Christian experience will be discussed further below.

Turning to the latest of Paul’s letters, the first mention of the resurrection in Romans comes very early, at 1:4. Paul describes Jesus as being ‘designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.’ In this instance, the resurrection of Christ serves as the most defining feature of Christ as the Son of God. As the letter continues, Paul firmly places the suffering and death of Christ as the precursor to the resurrection, a ‘distinctively Christian (Pauline) character of the teaching.’⁴⁵⁶ Only by dying with Christ can the members of the *ekklesia* be resurrected with Christ (Rom. 6:4-5), because ‘our old self was crucified with him so that...we might

456. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 313.

no longer be enslaved to sin' (6:6). And because Christ was raised from the dead, 'death no longer has dominion over him' (6:9), and so the members of the *ekklesia* will be similarly free from death in Christ. A few verses later, Paul urges the Roman *ekklesia* to 'not yield your members to sin...but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life' (6:13), in order to encourage them to look forward to the resurrection as a reward for their faithful lives within the *ekklesia*: 'you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong...to him who has been raised from the dead...' (7:4) Again, Paul stresses that faithful life in the community will result in resurrection (8:11).

Paul later situates belief in both Jesus and the resurrection as a requirement for the community,⁴⁵⁷ that those who 'confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead' will be saved (10:9). This comes in the midst of Paul's discussion of the place of Israel, that is, the ethnic Judeans, in God's plan of salvation. Paul writes about the Judean rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, noting that it was this rejection that allowed for the Gentiles to be admitted to God's chosen people, and thus played a crucial role in the formation of the *ekklesia* (Rom. 11:11-14). Following this, Paul offers hope to those who initially rejected Jesus, noting that 'if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world [through the admission of the Gentiles to God's plan], what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?' (11:15) This again emphasises the importance of the resurrection in the history of the *ekklesia*, as a memory which helps identify members of the *ekklesia* as belonging to a new group.

The presence of shared historical memories is important to the identity of any group, and the early Christ-following communities are no exception. In his letters, Paul

457. Jewett, *Romans*, 398–99 locates this belief as one 'that occurs at the time of conversion' and which therefore 'precedes baptism,' that is, initiation into the community.

has provided several historical memories of great import to the lives of the *ekklesia*, in the figure of Abraham as a man of upstanding faith, and in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ as formative and inspirational events. In terms of reinforcing the positive connotations of membership and the desired harmonious member relations, these historical figures and memories provide Christ-followers with not only a shared past to which they can cling, but a link in the present that further binds them together. But, as we have seen, these historical memories do not function only as historical memories. Each of them contributes to the development of cultural elements which contribute to the definition of the *ekklesia* as an identifiable group in the first century CE.

Ekklesial Culture

There are several examples of cultural features for the early *ekklesia* which will be discussed here, some of which are drawn from the historical memories just surveyed, others of which reflected the real life situation of many of the Christ-following *ekklesiai* existent in the first century CE, and others still which may reflect pre-Pauline practice, or which may have been instituted by Paul himself; the evidence is ambiguous, at best. We will begin with two which will be at least somewhat familiar to most modern readers: baptism and eucharist. From there, we will examine the ‘holy kiss’ and persecution as cultural events within the *ekklesia*. Each of these played a role in defining the first century *ekklesia* as an identifiable group.

Both baptism and the eucharist are, in most Christian churches today, central sacraments which represent community initiation and hold high levels of theological importance for churches where they are practised. Even non-Christians are likely to be familiar with, at the very least, the concepts of baptism and eucharist, if not the

particulars themselves, due to this importance.⁴⁵⁸ However, this examination will not focus overlong on the theological import of these practices; rather, I will focus on the way in which baptism and eucharist represent two features of *ekklesial* culture by which *ekklesia* members may come together and define themselves, inwardly and outwardly, as a group.⁴⁵⁹ In this section, we will examine the way Paul presents these and other features of an *ekklesial* culture in his letters, highlighting the role each would serve in both uniting the *ekklesia* together with their local members and a larger *ekklesial* body, and in identifying boundaries which marked out those inside the *ekklesia* from those outside of it.

Baptism

Baptism is discussed at three places in Paul's writings; the earliest mention comes at Gal. 3:26-28, wherein Paul cites a baptismal formula which some scholars believe suggest may have pre-dated Paul's mission.⁴⁶⁰ Baptism plays a central role in Paul's discussion at 1 Cor. 1:13-17, though this passage, as will be seen, serves more to discourage certain byproducts of baptism within the Corinthian *ekklesia* than anything

458. There is extensive literature on the theological importance of the sacraments in Paul's thought; Peter Lampe, "The Eucharist: Identifying with Christ on the Cross," *Interpretation* 48, no. 1 (1994): 38 argues that 'the sacraments [i.e., baptism and eucharist] are of no central theological interest in Paul's thought.' Others, such as Nathan D. Mitchell, "Paul on Baptism," *Worship* 83, no. 2 (2009): 160–72 and Hans Dieter Betz, "Transferring a Ritual: Paul's Interpretation of Baptism in Romans 6," in *Paul in His Hellenistic Context*, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 84–118 explore the baptismal theology within Paul, though admit that it is at times quite difficult. Such a debate lies outside the scope of this examination. See A.J.M. Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection: Studies in Pauline Theology Against Its Graeco-Roman Background* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1987) for more indepth discussions on this topic, as well as an extensive bibliography.

459. This is in no way intended to comment on the theological value of either baptism or the eucharist, nor is it intended to imply a distinction between sociological and theological matters. I have chosen to address both baptism and the eucharist as defining cultural features of the early Christ-following movement in part because of this theological significance.

460. Mitchell, "Paul on Baptism," 163–64.

else. And the fullest expression of Paul's thought regarding baptism occurs in his last letter, in Rom. 6:3-10. Here, Paul's presentation of baptism is 'characteristically different' than that in either Galatians or 1 Corinthians,⁴⁶¹ though only in terms of the theology of baptism laid out by Paul.

The baptismal formula laid out in Gal. 3:26-28 seems exceedingly simple: 'For as many of you as were baptised to Christ, you have put on Christ' (3:27). Dunn observes that this is the earliest example of baptism as an initiation ritual, noting that 'Christians' are 'those who 'have been baptised into Christ.'⁴⁶² Many theories have been put about exploring the meaning of 'you have put on Christ:' these have included being clothed in the image of God, as Adam at Gen. 1:26-27;⁴⁶³ putting on virtue in place of one's previous existence in sin;⁴⁶⁴ and the putting on of a divine figure of redemption, as in some Hellenistic mystery traditions.⁴⁶⁵ J. Albert Harrill has suggested that the 'putting on' of Christ represents an allusion on Paul's part to a coming of age ceremony for Roman boys, wherein the boy would put on the *toga virilis* for the first time.⁴⁶⁶ Set in the context of Paul's chastisement of the Galatian Christ-followers, this theory is not without merit. However, for our study the important aspect of this baptismal formula is not found in the Christ-follower's 'putting on' of Christ, but in the following verse.

461. Betz, "Transferring," 85.

462. James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 203.

463. See Jacob Jervell, *Imago Dei* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1960), 231–56, and Wayne A. Meeks, "Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity," *History of Religions* 13, no. 3 (1974): 185–89.

464. Meeks, "Image," 184.

465. Betz, *Galatians*, 188; Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection*, 332–42.

466. J. Albert Harrill, "Coming of Age and Putting on Christ: The Toga Virilis Ceremony, Its Paraenesis, and Paul's Interpretation of Baptism in Galatians," *Novum Testamentum* 44, no. 3 (2002): 252–77.

Gal. 3:28 is one of the most often quoted passages of Paul's letters, and has received much scholarly attention over the years: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is not male and female;⁴⁶⁷ for you all are one in Christ Jesus.' This verse must be taken in close concert with Paul's statement regarding putting on Christ through baptism; whatever the meaning of that enigmatic statement, the result is that all members of the *ekklesia* are one. In Galatians, then, baptism is presented as both an important theological initiation into the community, as well as a cultural and sociological feature of that community. As Paul has laid it out, baptism into Christ changes all of the previous cultural and sociological distinctions to which members of the *ekklesia* might have laid claim; neither male nor female, neither slave nor free, and, most importantly, neither Jew nor Greek.⁴⁶⁸

Similarly, when discussing baptism in 1 Corinthians, 'Paul's aim...is not to provide a theology of baptism.'⁴⁶⁹ Rather, Paul discusses baptism in 1 Corinthians in order to address and correct 'divisive behaviour'⁴⁷⁰ among the Corinthian *ekklesia*, part of which stemmed from baptism, and once again to state the transformation undergone by converts as they took on the new group identity boundary markers of the *ekklesia*.

467. Many modern translations render this clause as 'there is neither male nor female,' in keeping with the pattern of the two previous clauses; so, e.g., RSV, KJV, NIV. The Greek of this clause, however, does not feature the οὐκ...οὐδέ of the previous two; rather, it reads οὐκ...καὶ, and so I offer the translation 'there is not male and female.' Cf. NRSV.

468. James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 205; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 156–57; Lührmann, *Galatians*, 75.

469. Betz, "Transferring," 104–07. Cf. Maria Pascuzzi, "Baptism-Based Allegiance and the Divisions in Corinth: A Reexamination of 1 Corinthians 1:13–17," *CBQ* 71, no. 4 (2009): 813. As noted above, this is not to say that baptism does not hold theological significance within the Pauline communities of the first century. Baptism undoubtedly plays both a theological and a sociological role in the formation of the Christ-following movement. As indicated in the preceding discussion of Galatians 3:26–28, and in the coming discussion of Rom. 6:3–10, baptism had clear theological significance Paul, his communities and, presumably, the entire Christ-following movement.

470. Pascuzzi, "Baptism-Based Allegiance," 813.

Indeed, Paul clearly states that, at least at the writing of 1 Corinthians, baptism was not ‘the central part of his apostolic office.’⁴⁷¹

Paul begins his discussion of baptism at 1 Cor. 1:12, stating that the Corinthian Christ-followers were saying, variously, ‘I belong to Paul,’ or Cephas, Apollos or Christ. Even without further context, it is clear from this that a divide had occurred within the Corinthian *ekklesia*.⁴⁷² That this directly precedes Paul’s discussion of baptism suggests that several missionaries had been at work baptising amongst the Corinthian community, some in their own name, and some in the name of Christ, and that the Corinthian Christ-followers were dividing into groups along these lines. At 1 Cor. 1:13, Paul asks the Corinthians ‘were you baptised in the name of Paul?’ The expected answer is, of course, no. We may assume that they were baptised ‘in the name of Jesus,’ or with a similar formula revolving around Christ. However, though not baptised *in the name* of Paul, they were baptised *by* Paul or one of the others, and whatever the baptismal formulae employed by the other missionaries, the *ekklesia* had begun to divide along these lines. Paul then expresses his relief that he only baptised a few of the Christ-followers in Corinth (Crispus, Gaius, the household of Stephanas, and possibly a few others), precisely because he does not want the *ekklesia* to be divided. We then reach the closest thing to a baptismal theology which can be found in 1 Corinthians, the statement that ‘Christ did not send me to baptise but to preach the gospel...lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power’ (1 Cor. 1:17).

Here, the role of baptism is presented not as a community identifying cultural feature, but as a feature which has become a detriment to the solidarity of that

471. Betz, “Transferring,” 85–86.

472. Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 55; Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 43; Conzelmann and Leitch, *1 Corinthians*, 32–33.

community.⁴⁷³ However, from this discussion, we learn that baptism was, indeed, part of the formation of the *ekklesia* at Corinth, and presumably among Christ-following communities elsewhere. That the Corinthian *ekklesia* was able to divide along lines based on who baptised them tells us that the members of the *ekklesia* were, indeed, baptised, and that this event in their *ekklesial* membership was so formative that it played a role in individual self-identification within the community.⁴⁷⁴ And while at Corinth this led to a division, one which Paul attempts to correct, along with so much else, in his Corinthian letters, we can safely assume that baptism was a formative part of the *ekklesia*, a cultural element carried out upon initiation into the community. Indeed, later in 1 Corinthians, Paul repeats some of the baptismal theology expressed in Galatians: ‘For by one spirit we were all baptised into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free...’ (1 Cor. 12:13). As before, here Paul presents baptism as a sociological and cultural transformation; whatever one was prior to baptism is meaningless, as all who have experienced baptism are ‘one body,’ that is, one community, in this case, the *ekklesia*.⁴⁷⁵ While the baptismal event plays a role in the salvation theology of the *ekklesia* as presented in Paul because those persons who have received baptism have died and risen with Christ, and experienced ‘suffering and vindication’ not in their own bodies, but through Christ,⁴⁷⁶ this is not the primary aim of baptism in Paul’s thinking. Baptism is instead placed as a key cultural event in the life of members of the *ekklesia*,

473. Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 60: in dividing themselves, the Corinthians were actually dividing Christ. Cf. Conzelmann and Leitch, *1 Corinthians*, 35. That solidarity of the *ekklesia* is an issue for Paul is without question. As one of our identity forming criteria, we will return to a discussion of solidarity later in this chapter

474. This perhaps led to the formation of several house churches in Corinth, based on details such as who baptised the members of a given community.

475. Cf. Conzelmann and Leitch, *1 Corinthians*, 212.

476. Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 288.

one which we can assume preceded their participation in other aspects of *ekklesial* life. Baptism as a Christ-following initiation ritual is further supported by Paul's fullest expression of a baptismal theology in Romans 6.

As mentioned above, the baptismal formula of Romans 6 is very different from that found in the Galatian epistle. One of the most prominent differences is the fact that, as Betz recognises, while 'in the other letters Paul's own concept of baptism remains largely in the background, he spells it out more clearly in Romans....'⁴⁷⁷ Also unlike Galatians, the Romans baptismal formula is clearly linked to the Christ-followers' participation in Christ's suffering and death: 'Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death?' (Rom. 6:3) And by this baptism into the death of Christ, 'we were buried with him' so that, as Christ was raised from the dead, 'we too might walk in newness of life' (6:4). While Galatians, and to some extent 1 Corinthians, both suggest that baptism is a point of initiation for members of the *ekklesia*, in Romans Paul clearly places baptism near the beginning of one's life in the community. It is important to note, however, that '[f]or Paul, being crucified with Christ is first of all an experience of faith that precedes the ritual of baptism,'⁴⁷⁸ and that 'baptism...as an initiation presupposes that conversion has taken place.'⁴⁷⁹ Therefore, before one could undergo the cultural element of baptism, one first had to accept the transformative experience of sharing in the crucifixion and death of Christ. This sets the Roman baptismal formula apart from that in Galatians; where Galatians' baptism is primarily a cultural ritual, in Romans it is firmly rooted in salvation theology. This is not to say, however, that baptism as a sacrament was central to Paul's theology, as discussed

477. Betz, "Transferring," 85–86.

478. Betz, "Transferring," 112; Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection*, 49.

479. Betz, "Transferring," 109.

at the beginning of this examination. Rather, Paul's primary theological concern is that of salvation, with baptism being presented as one of the rituals or steps by which one demonstrated to the community one's commitment to the salvation of the death of Christ.

Eucharist

As with baptism, the main purpose of Paul's discussion of the eucharist, focused entirely in 1 Corinthians, is not theological, but sociological. As Lampe notes, 'Paul does not set forth a "theology of the Eucharist" but instead presupposes a certain theological concept about the Lord's supper that he does not develop.'⁴⁸⁰ Barrett concurs, noting 'that Paul gives at most allusions to, and not comprehensive accounts of, the meal as he knew and understood it.'⁴⁸¹ On our reading, the theology of the eucharist laid out in 1 Corinthians is, as with baptism, primarily one of salvation; the eucharist is presented as a symbol for those who have accepted the crucifixion and death of Christ as transformative events in their lives, and have joined the *ekklesia*. Here again, Paul presents a cultural element for the *ekklesia* by which the members may be drawn together as a group and simultaneously identified from other communities.

The first mention of a eucharistic cultural element among the *ekklesia* comes at 1 Corinthians 10. In speaking to the Corinthian Christ-followers about temptation, Paul identifies the 'cup of blessing which we bless'⁴⁸² as a 'participation in the blood of

480. Lampe, "Eucharist," 36 As with the preceding discussion on baptism, this is not to imply that the eucharist was without theological import in the Pauline Christ-following communities. Rather, this statement merely observes the fact that Paul does not enumerate a eucharistic theology within his writings. Whatever the theological role or import of the eucharist to these communities, it is not specified, as such, by Paul.

481. Barrett, *Romans*, 231.

482. A technical Jewish term 'for the cup of wine drunk at the end of a meal as its formal close; Barrett, *Romans*, 231. At the same time, Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 465 suggests that Paul sets the eucharistic

Christ,’ and the ‘bread which we break’ as a ‘participation in the body of Christ’ (10:16). There are obvious theological overtones to this statement, primarily derived from the role of the body and blood of Christ in the act of salvation upon the cross; by partaking of the bread and the cup, the Christ-followers participate in the body and blood, that is, in the death of Christ.⁴⁸³ But Paul does not linger on this. The focus immediately shifts toward a sociological concern, using the theological import of the eucharist to establish a sociological unity between Christ-followers: ‘Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread’ (10:17). The melding of many persons of many backgrounds into one community body is the primary concern here, that those who participate in the death of Christ are one united body, rather than a disparate group of individuals who share little in common. Paul, then, has used the event of the eucharist, and the underlying theology of the event, as a means to unite the members of the Corinthian *ekklesia*.

It is not until 1 Cor. 11:23-29 that Paul first lays out a eucharistic formula, one which he identifies as ‘the Lord’s supper’ (11:20). As with the bulk of the baptism discussion in 1 Corinthians, the eucharistic formula comes in the form of behaviour correction. The Corinthians have strayed from what Paul taught them when he was among them, and, having learned of this, Paul is writing to correct the infractions. When meeting together to eat ‘the Lord’s supper,’ Paul describes the Corinthians’ behaviour as each beginning to eat regardless of the presence of the other members of the *ekklesia*, so that some are sated and drunk while others remain hungry (11:21). Lampe locates this

meal opposite ‘the sacred pagan meals’ common in Greco-Roman religion, and referred to by Paul in vv. 19-21.

483. Cf. Conzelmann and Leitch, *I Corinthians*, 171: ‘The basic idea is that of the atoning power of the blood.’ Also, Conzelmann understands ‘body’ as the *ekklesia*, the church, and ‘blood’ as their share in the salvation of Christ; 171-172. See also: Goppelt, *TDNT*, vol. 6, 143, and Barrett, *I Corinthians*, 232–33: ‘the Christian through taking the wine in the cup, receives an interest in the death of Christ.’

event in the Greco-Roman potluck custom *eranos*, wherein participants of a meal would come together and each bring a basket of food, either to eat themselves or to place on the common table.⁴⁸⁴ This is lent further support at 11:33-34, when Paul instructs those who are coming together to wait for each other, and perhaps to eat something before the Lord's supper so as not to be hungry and tempted to begin without the rest of the *ekklesia*. Given that the Corinthian *ekklesia* was composed largely of Gentile converts, it seems a safe assumption that they would be influenced by a Greco-Roman custom in which many had participated prior to joining the *ekklesia*. Regardless of the context, Paul finds the Corinthian Christ-followers to be in error, and he reiterates the eucharistic formula he had previously taught to them in the following verses.

Paul begins the eucharistic formula by reminding the Corinthians that what he taught them, he 'received from the Lord,'⁴⁸⁵ that Jesus 'took bread' (11:23), gave thanks, and instructed those present that 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me' (11:24). 'After supper', Jesus also took the cup, and instructed 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me' (11:25). Here then, is the eucharistic formula of Paul's thinking: the blessing and breaking of the bread, followed by a meal, and ended with the blessing and sharing of the cup. Conzelmann stresses the distinction here, observing that the formula does not focus on 'blood' but on the 'cup of blessing' of 10:16.⁴⁸⁶ And as at 1 Cor. 10:16, the theology of this eucharistic formula is firmly rooted in the salvation

484. Lampe, "Eucharist," 38–40.

485. The Greek here, παραλαμβάνειν, 'to receive,' is a 'technical' term in both the Greek and Jewish worlds, making this statement of Paul's one that both Greeks and Jews could appreciate. See Conzelmann and Leitch, *1 Corinthians*, 195–96 Cf. Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 548 who states that the term is a technical term 'from Paul's Jewish heritage for the transmission of religious instruction.'

486. Conzelmann and Leitch, *1 Corinthians*, 199.

event. The body and blood of Christ as given up and spilled upon the cross are at the centre of the eucharist: 'For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes' (11:26). Again, we find that the eucharist, for Paul, represents a way by which the *ekklesia* may be brought together and identified apart from others, through their participation in the remembrance of Christ's death. And in addition to stating that those who participate in the eucharist also participate in the death of Christ, Paul warns that 'whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner' (11:27) or who does so 'without discerning the body' (11:29) invites profanity and judgment on himself.⁴⁸⁷ Given the understanding that 'body' refers to the church itself, the *ekklesia*, and not to the physical body of Christ, this warning suggests that not only would offence be given to the Lord, but also to the members of the *ekklesia* directly, something warned against by Paul at 1 Cor. 10:32. And while this might not deter a non-member from partaking in the eucharistic meal, not knowing or not caring about the import of the event for the *ekklesia*, it does suggest that the Christ-followers themselves would have guarded this event, or at least been expected to do so, from participation by outsiders. By so doing, Paul establishes the eucharistic event not only as part of the salvation theology of the *ekklesia*, but as a cultural element in which members participated and non-members did not. Barrett suggests that Paul views the Lord's supper as a Christian Passover, and that the *ekklesia* is encouraged to remember and proclaim 'aloud the vent on which their existence was based,' that is, the sacrifice of Christ in which they all share through the taking of the bread and wine.

487. Conzelmann and Leitch, *1 Corinthians*, 202 again stresses that the 'body' here represents the *ekklesia* body, the church, which has a share in the salvific 'blood' in the cup of blessing. Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 273 disagrees, noting that the addition of 'blood' places this warning in a cosmological realm, as representations of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Thus, those who eat and drink 'unworthily' make the Lord's supper something of the earth, rather than of Christ.

The Holy Kiss

The command to exchange a kiss between members of the *ekklesia* appears very rarely in the New Testament, only five times in the entirety of the 27 books. Of these five occurrences, four of them occur in the undisputed Pauline corpus, at Rom. 16:16, 1 Cor. 16:20, 2 Cor. 13:12, and 1 Thess. 5:26. The final New Testament appearance of this command comes at 1 Peter 5:14, though these are not the only instances in which a kiss appears in the New Testament. In each of the Synoptic Gospels, Judas is portrayed as identifying Jesus with a kiss (Matt. 26:48; Mark 14:44; Luke 22:47-48), and Luke 7:45 portrays Jesus as praising the ‘woman of the city’ for kissing his feet. L. Edward Phillips notes that the Gospel of John ‘contains no explicit reference to a kiss,’ but posits that ‘Jesus’ giving of the Holy Spirit to his disciples through a breath possibly demonstrates a kiss.’⁴⁸⁸ However, none of these instances represent a command to the Christ-followers that they should exchange a kiss, and so have little bearing on our discussion. And while the five instances of a command all bear many similarities, the 1 Peter occurrence dates from much later than any of Paul’s letters, and therefore cannot be said to have influenced the apostle’s writings any more than can the Gospel instances.⁴⁸⁹

In the Greco-Roman world, the kiss was something shared primarily between family members. In one study, Michael Penn conducted ‘a survey of almost nine hundred non-Christian Greek and Latin references to kissing,’ and concluded that ‘familial kisses constituted the second-largest category, surpassed only by kisses

488. L. Edward Phillips, *The Ritual Kiss in Early Christian Worship* (Cambridge: Grove Books Limited, 1996), 13.

489. Though the Pauline corpus represents the earliest known reference to the act of exchanging a holy kiss, Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 396 notes that the act may already have been cultic for the *ekklesiai* prior to the writings of Paul’s letters; it cannot be determined whether Paul initiated the practice, or is merely referring to one which already existed.

between unmarried lovers.⁴⁹⁰ Phillips notes that there were some situations in which non-family members would exchange a kiss, but that ultimately '[t]he privacy of the family was the context within which the kiss could be shared with impunity.'⁴⁹¹ And Robert Jewett observes that 'the evidence from the Jewish as well as the Greco-Roman environments indicates that 'Kisses are for relatives,' while other contexts, including the erotic, are secondary.⁴⁹²

In the Jewish world of antiquity, the kiss was more strictly regarded. Generally, it was restricted to family members (e.g., Gen. 27:26; 29:13; 31:28), as a greeting between friends (1 Sam. 20:41), and as a sign of honour (1 Sam. 10:1; 2 Sam. 15:5). Between family members, the kiss was limited to one's 'mother and the sister (who is born) of his mother and the sister (who is born) of his clan and family and the wife who shares his bed' (*Joseph and Aseneth* 19.5).⁴⁹³ These familial kisses were generally conducted in privacy, and were considered obscene except 'for greetings after a long absence and at partings, or in the acceptance of high office' (Genesis Rabbah).⁴⁹⁴ Additionally, Fee observes that the kiss could also serve as 'evidence of reconciliation' (Gen. 33:4).⁴⁹⁵ In the context of the Hellenistic Jewish world, Phillips also suggests elements of purity maintenance in the sharing, or not sharing, of a kiss. He highlights

490. Michael L. Penn, "Performing Family: Ritual Kissing and the Construction of Early Christian Kinship," *JECS* 10, no. 2 (2002): 159 offers an extensive list of citations in support of this conclusion, which need not be reproduced here.

491. Phillips, *Ritual Kiss*, 9.

492. Jewett, *Romans*, 973. These situations generally involved nobility in the ancient world, exchanging a kiss as a sign of status relationship in Persia, and as a boon of honour granted by the Roman Emperor; Phillips, *Ritual Kiss*, 5–6. Cf. Best, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 245.

493. Cf. Phillips, *Ritual Kiss*, 6.

494. Cf. Phillips, *Ritual Kiss*, 6.

495. Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 836.

this in *Joseph and Aseneth*, a Hellenistic Jewish text, as a demonstration of the potential spiritual contamination which could occur through a kiss: ‘And Joseph said, “It is not fitting for a man who worships God...to kiss a strange woman who will bless with her mouth dead and dumb idols and eat from their table bread of strangulation...”’ (*Joseph and Aseneth* 19.11).⁴⁹⁶ This element of purity maintenance seems to be absent in the ‘holy kiss’ of the *ekklesia* in the first century CE.

Penn suggests that the adoption of the Greco-Roman kiss ‘helped early Christians redefine the concept of family,’⁴⁹⁷ and focuses his study on how the kiss served ‘as a way to define Christianity as a family,’ though he does note that ‘the ritual kiss raises numerous questions regarding its practice and connections with community identity and social boundaries.’⁴⁹⁸ Phillips’ study, an abbreviated version of his doctoral thesis at the University of Notre Dame, addresses another aspect of the kiss in defining the early Christian community, identifying the ‘holy kiss’ as ‘a ritual communication of the divine *pneuma* dwelling within Christians,’⁴⁹⁹ and that the ‘holy kiss’ was closely related to the closing benediction found in Galatians, Philippians and Philemon, that ‘the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit’ (Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23; Phlm. 1:25).⁵⁰⁰ However, what both Penn and Phillips hint at is that the kiss was used in the early *ekklesia* not only as a way of identifying family or communicating the Holy Spirit, but as a way of identifying other members of the Christ-following community. That they

496. Cf. Phillips, *Ritual Kiss*, 5.

497. Penn, “Performing Family,” 154.

498. Penn, “Performing Family,” 158.

499. Phillips, *Ritual Kiss*, 13.

500. Cf. Phillips, *Ritual Kiss*, 8–13.

were encouraged to perform this kiss at gatherings of the *ekklesia* only serves to further identify the members of the *ekklesia* from the ‘kiss conservative’ groups around them.

The formula of the four Pauline instances of the kiss follow a nearly identical pattern. Each begins with ἀσπάσασθε, an imperative plural verb, commanding the entire *ekklesia* to offer greetings, and each ends with the phrase ἐν φιλήματι ἁγίῳ, ‘in’ or, in a clearer sense in English, ‘with a holy kiss.’ The only discrepancy between the four Pauline instances comes in the object of the commanded greetings; in 1 Thess., the *ekklesia* is commanded to greet ‘all the brethren’ with the holy kiss, while in Rom., 1 and 2 Cor., the greeting is to be directed to ‘one another.’ This is not problematic for our examination, however. Given the context of Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians, each of which are unquestionably directed to the Christ-following communities of Rome and Corinth, the ‘one another’ who are to be greeted in these instances are clearly other members of the *ekklesia* in these cities, a fact which is stated outright in 1 Thessalonians.⁵⁰¹ This locates the act of exchanging the ‘holy kiss’ strictly within the *ekklesia* and thus serves as a way of identifying fellow members of the community. Though there are no overt purity elements within these four verses, there are echoes of the restricted kiss reasoning present in *Joseph and Aseneth*, discussed above; where Joseph feels it is wrong to kiss someone outside of his religious tradition, Paul suggests that the people with whom Christ-followers should exchange the ‘holy kiss’ are others within the *ekklesia*.⁵⁰² This is perhaps a point which Paul sought to address in

501. Best, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 245 concludes ‘that Paul is addressing all the members of the community.’

502. Interestingly, William Klassen, “The Sacred Kiss in the New Testament: An Example of Social Boundary Lines,” *NTS* 39, no. 1 (1993): 133–35 suggests that Paul instructed the Christ-followers to exchange this kiss as a means to underscore the breakdown of former barriers between them, for example, those between Greeks and Jews and slaves and freemen; similarly, Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 773 and David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 554–55.

designating the kiss as ‘holy,’ implying that it was meant to be shared only with others who were themselves holy, that is, members of the *ekklesia*, Christ-followers.⁵⁰³ Jewett observes that there is no such analogy between holiness and a ritual kiss among Greco-Roman societies, or at Qumran.⁵⁰⁴ However, limiting the kiss to only those who were ‘holy,’ that is, members of the *ekklesia*, does not seem motivated by a fear of spiritual contamination in Paul’s writings. While in *Joseph and Aseneth* Joseph refrains from kissing Aseneth until after her conversion, the idea of refraining from kissing a spouse who has not joined the *ekklesia* is treated differently in Paul. At 1 Cor. 7:14, Paul informs the Corinthian *ekklesia* that ‘the unbelieving husband is consecrated through the believing wife,’ and vice versa. This means that, for Paul, sharing a kiss with a non-member of the *ekklesia* would not contaminate the Christ-follower, but sanctify the unbeliever. In this way, Paul has redefined one of the purity boundaries that existed around the Judean identity group, turning it into a unique element of Christian culture. This suggests that the identification of the kiss as ‘holy’ was intended not to protect the community, but to further mark it out. Insiders would exchange the ‘holy kiss’ only with other insiders, thus publicly reaffirming their commitment to each other and the *ekklesia*, while simultaneously excluding non-members in a very deliberate way.

At the same time, Paul’s instruction to share a ‘holy kiss’ flaunts the social conservatism surrounding the exchange of kisses prevalent in the ancient world, at least from the perspective of outsiders.⁵⁰⁵ It is partly this practice, coupled with the Christ-

503. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 899; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 772–73.

504. Jewett, *Romans*, 973; cf. Klassen, “Sacred Kiss”.

505. Larry W. Hurtado, *At the Origins of Christian Worship: The Context and Character of Earliest Christian Devotion* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), 42–44 notes that ‘later church authorities sought to restrict the kiss to members of one’s own sex’ (cf. *Apostolic Constitutions* 2.7; 8.2.10 in *ANF* 7.422, 4867), and that the holy kiss was to be given only once and with a closed mouth (cf. Athenagoras *Legatio* 32 in *ANF* 2.146). Through these restrictions, the leaders of the Christ-following groups sought to

followers' view of themselves as a kinship group, that gave rise to later accusations of incest within the Christian community. The meetings of the *ekklesia* at which they were apparently to exchange the 'holy kiss' were most probably those held at the house churches of *ekklesia* members, but these were by no means restricted only to members of the *ekklesia*. In their efforts to evangelise and win new converts, Christian house church meetings would have included fully initiated members as well as those seeking admittance to the faith community, and others who might have just been curious as to what this new Christ-following movement had to say; regardless, the meetings were not private. But to the more conservative elements of society, for example, Romans or Judeans, this exchange of a kiss between non-biologically and non-maritally related persons in public would have been seen as quite scandalous. But by presenting a new set of social norms for the *ekklesia*, Paul created a unique space within the cultural context of the ancient world in which the *ekklesia* existed on its own.

Persecution

1 Clement, written late in the first century, refers to persecutions of Christians under the Roman emperor Nero as events which had already occurred. This places persecutions of Christians in the mid to late 60s of the first century.⁵⁰⁶ Going back

'abate pagan rumours of Christian promiscuity.' He notes that a similar concern can be seen in Paul's own warnings against adultery, e.g., 1 Thess. 4:1-8.

506. It is also possible that the text is referring to persecutions under Domitian or Nerva, in the last decade of the first century: Michael Holmes, ed. and trans., *The Apostolic Fathers*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 34–35; cf. Marie-Françoise Baslez, "The Origin of the Martyrdom Images: From the Book of Maccabees to the First Christians," in *The Books of the Maccabees: History, Theology, Ideology: Papers of the Second International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books, Pépa, Hungary, 9–11 June, 2005*, ed. Géza G. Xeravits and József Zsengellér (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 115. This puts the possible writing of this text anywhere between the late 60s CE to the turn of the century; if it is to Domitian that the author of 1 Clement is referring, that places the persecutions of Christians in the latter half of the 90s CE. It must be noted, of course, that the existence of these persecutions is by no means certain.

further, we find numerous references to the persecution of Christians even before the time of Nero, in the earliest existent Christian texts, the letters of Paul.

In his letters, Paul writes about the persecutions which he perpetrated against the Christian group, and which he then later experienced as a member of the group, as well as about the persecutions faced by his congregations (e.g., Gal. 1:13-14; 1 Cor. 15:8-10; 2 Cor. 11:23-37; Phil. 3:4-6; 1 Thess. 2:13-16). There have been many attempts by many authors to determine the identities and/or motives of the persecutors, but this examination will not endeavour to do so.⁵⁰⁷ Rather, our study will examine the threefold way in which Paul uses persecution to identify members of the *ekklesia*, and thus the *ekklesia* itself: by identifying members of the *ekklesia* as belonging to something which is itself an identifiable entity, that is, they can be identified as Christ-followers as opposed to Jews or Romans or Corinthians; by calling on the Christ-followers to accept suffering in imitation of Christ; and by presenting persecution as part of the fulfilment of the Christian belief structure.

Before proceeding further, it must be noted that the persecution of which Paul speaks, and which his followers and other Christians endured, is not the same as that levelled against Christians in the late first and second centuries. Rather, the persecution of which Paul speaks takes on many different forms, for example, being imprisoned, and the numerous beatings of which Paul writes, along with a series of other misfortunes

507. See, for example, Daniel R. Schwartz, "The Accusation and the Accusers at Philippi (Acts 16:20-21)," *Biblica* 65 (1984): 357-63, Colin G. Kruse, "The Price Paid for a Ministry Among Gentiles: Paul's Persecution at the Hands of the Jews," in *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin*, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and Terence Paige (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992), 260-72, Bockmuehl, "1 Thess. 2:14-16", Richard B. Cook, "Paul and the Victims of His Persecution: The Opponents in Galatia," *BTB* 32 (2002): 182-91, as well as nearly any commentary on Paul's letters.

faced by his congregations.⁵⁰⁸ This is very different from the common conception of an organised, Empire-wide Christian hunt, resulting in martyr deaths of the faithful. Paul did not use the word this way. In all probability, he could not have, as persecutions in the classic sense had not yet occurred; at the earliest, this type of persecution would have occurred in the mid to late 60s, a date which corresponds roughly to Paul's assumed death. Persecution, then, will be used throughout the rest of this examination to mean any of these various hardships levelled against the Christians, or any other group, based on their religious beliefs or practices.

We will begin with those passages in which Paul addresses his own pre-conversion persecution of the Christian movement, these being Gal. 1:13-14, 1 Cor. 15:8-10, and Phil. 3:4-6.⁵⁰⁹ In the least provocative of these three, 1 Cor. 15:8-10, Paul states simply that he was 'the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.' Paul himself was quick to acknowledge the fact that he, of all people, was unworthy to be an apostle of Christ, precisely because he had 'persecuted the church of God.'⁵¹⁰ However, though this statement does offer a valuable insight into Paul's reasoning, this sentiment is absent from both the Galatians and Philippians passages cited above. In both of these, we learn the reason *why* Paul, then Saul the Pharisee, persecuted the 'church of God,' information which is not provided in

508. See Arland J. Hultgren, "Paul's Pre-Christian Persecutions of the Church: Their Purpose, Locale, and Nature," *JBL* 95 (1976): 108, 109 and John S. Pobee, *Persecution and Martyrdom in the Theology of Paul* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 1.

509. One may also include Gal. 1:22-24 in this list. However, in this verse, the charge of persecuting the Christian community is placed in indirect speech, in the mouths of the Christians in Judea, rather than as a statement made by Paul himself. This occurrence will be examined below.

510. Many commentators agree on this point. Cf. F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 143; Conzelmann and Leitch, *1 Corinthians*, 260; and Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 693-94. On who exactly the 'church of God' was, Barrett posits that this is a reference to 'the whole company of Christian believers,' rather than those of one particular location; Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 344-45.

the 1 Cor. passage. According to Galatians 1:13-14, Paul ‘persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it...so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.’ Of particular import here is that Paul was ‘zealous’ for Ἰουδαϊσμός, generally rendered ‘Judaism’ but more accurately meaning ‘Jewish observance.’⁵¹¹ and the implication is that this zeal drove him to persecute the church of God ‘violently.’⁵¹² Similarly, though less explicitly, Philippians 3:6 states that Paul was ‘as to zeal a persecutor of the church.’ Here again, Paul is citing ‘zeal’ as the motivation behind the actions taken against the Christian community, though in this case, the emphatic adverb is missing. Some commentators see a similar emphasis in the surrounding text of Philippians, in which Paul lays out his Jewish credentials.⁵¹³ It is interesting that in the Philippians passage, his zeal for Judaism, expressed as zeal as a persecutor, is but one feature of his Jewish credentials, while in the Galatians passage, it is the key feature of Paul’s ‘previous way of life in Judaism.’ Clearly, Paul considered this zeal, which lead him to persecute the Christians, very important to his identity as a Jew; as seen in Chapter 2, Torah observance was central to Jewish identity. It should come as no surprise, then, that after his conversion, Paul made a 180 degree turn; rather than his zeal

511. ‘Zealous’ action such as this was generally enacted in defence of proper Torah observance; see Terence L. Donaldson, “Zealot and Convert: The Origin of Paul’s Christ-Torah Antithesis,” *CBQ* 51 (1989): 672–73, with bibliography. As noted previously, this desire to defend proper Torah observance suggests that, as the ‘zealous’ persecutor of the Christ-following movement, Saul the Pharisee considered the group to be still part of the Jewish identity group.

512. James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 58–59 emphasises the importance of this adverb, noting that other possible translations include ‘to an extraordinary degree, beyond measure, extravagantly, in excess.’ He concludes that Paul now ‘regards his ardent defence of Judaism as excessive’, presumably because Paul now understands the Christ-following communities as being the true people of God.

513. Justin Taylor notes that both the Galatians and Philippians passages examined here ‘are at pains to emphasise that Paul had been an excellent Jew. Both associate his persecution of the church with that excellence, and indeed compare his enthusiasm as a persecutor with his enthusiasm for his religion.’ Justin Taylor, “Why Did Paul Persecute the Church?” in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Graham N. Stanton and Guy G. Stroumsa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 100. See also Thurston and Ryan, *Philippians and Philemon*, 122.

for the law, and thus his credentials as a Jew, it is now his zeal for Christ which marks his credentials as a Christian. And, as his zeal for Judaism manifested in persecution of Christians, so his zeal for Christ manifests itself in enduring persecutions.

There are no less than 10 occurrences within Paul's undisputed letters where Paul demonstrates his zeal for Christ through his patient and even willing endurance of persecution.⁵¹⁴ This point was of great importance to Paul. These passages, though they occur in various letters in very different contexts, have many things in common, and present in each of them is the idea that Paul is sharing in the sufferings of Christ. For example, Philemon 1:9 finds Paul identifying himself as 'an ambassador and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus' in his appeal for clemency for the runaway Onesimus. Thurston and Ryan see the language of this passage as equating 'ambassador' with 'prisoner,' implying that to be an ambassador, or apostle (both of which terms refer to one who is sent out on behalf of an authority), for Christ, one must also be a prisoner for Christ, that is, suffer for Christ;⁵¹⁵ similarly, Lohse emphasises that, by being a 'prisoner for Christ,' Paul is sharing 'in the weakness and humiliation of Christ, for whose sake he is now suffering.'⁵¹⁶ A similar idea can be found in Philippians 3:7-11:

'But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ. ...that I may know his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.'

514. Cf. Pobee, *Persecution and Martyrdom*, 93–94 and Kruse, "The Price Paid," 260.

515. Thurston and Ryan, *Philippians and Philemon*, 233–34.

516. Eduard Lohse, William R. Poehlmann, and Robert J. Karris, trans., Helmut Koester, ed., *Colossians and Philemon*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 199.

Note that here, Paul twice states that he is either willing to give up, or has already given up, ‘all things’ ‘for the sake of Christ.’ This comes amid a speech intended to encourage the Philippian Christ-followers in their continued devotion to and faith in Christ, an aspect of a new identity that is intended to take precedence over their other identities, as it does here for Paul. But Paul goes even further. He explicitly states that he desires to share in the sufferings of Christ, because it seems that, in Paul’s reckoning, this is how one ‘attains the resurrection of the dead.’⁵¹⁷ The idea of suffering for Christ, of sharing in the suffering of Christ in order to be more like Christ, may be found throughout Paul’s letters, and is perhaps most explicitly stated in 2 Corinthians.

The pericope in question, 2 Corinthians 4:8-12, begins with the statement that Paul is ‘afflicted in every way, but not crushed.’ The rest of this verse and the next are made up of what Lambrecht calls ‘apostolic hardships,’ followed by something that represents ‘the presence of God’s power’⁵¹⁸ - Paul is perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. These hardships do not worry Paul precisely because of his belief that such hardships contribute to a Christian life: ‘for while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh’ (2 Cor. 4:11). It is clear that Paul sees ‘his suffering in close relationship to Jesus’ ‘having been given up to death,’⁵¹⁹ emphasising the significance of Paul’s suffering in his identification as both a

517. Many commentators agree on this: cf. Thurston and Ryan, *Philippians and Philemon*, 125 and Carolyn Osiek, *Philippians Philemon* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 93. Hawthorn and Martin posit that, for Paul, the resurrection and ‘the fellowship of his sufferings are to be thought of not as two totally separate experiences but as alternate aspects of the same experience,’ unquestionably linking these two phenomena; Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Colombia: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2003), 197.

518. Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 72.

519. Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 73.

Christian and an apostle.⁵²⁰ And just to leave no doubt as to what he is getting at, later in 2 Corinthians, Paul states that he is a better ‘servant of Christ’ than his opponents, in part because of his endurance of such sufferings. Paul exists ‘with far greater labours, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings and often near death’ (2 Cor 11:23). He goes on to enumerate these sufferings: beaten five times by ‘the Jews’;⁵²¹ beaten three

520. Cf. Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 74, F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 198, and Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 349–50.

521. It has been suggested to me in several conversations that this particular form of punishment is one to which Paul, as a Jew, would have had to willingly submit, an indication that he still thought of himself as part of the Jewish identity group. To this, I must accede; as noted, Paul did still exhibit boundary markers of the Jewish identity group. However, certain statements of Paul’s, particularly his observation that ‘To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews’ (1 Cor 9:20) indicate that Paul did not necessarily see membership in the Jewish identity group as being his *primary* identity. That is, if Paul was able *to become like* a Jew, it is clear that he was not already a Jew, at least, not entirely. That both of these passages occur in the Corinthian correspondence should not go without notice; if, in 1 Corinthians, Paul notes his ability *to become like* a Jew, and in 2 Corinthians recounts his submission as a Jew to Jewish punishment, it is reasonable to assume that the latter is merely an example of the former; Paul submitted to Jewish punishment in order *to become like* a Jew, and in so doing, to win Jews to the Christ-following community.

The view that Paul was able and willing to alter his behaviour in order to ‘become like’ the people with whom he was interacting is widely accepted among New Testament scholars. Recently, however, some scholars have offered a different interpretation of this passage, in particular Paul’s claim that he becomes all things to all people, notably David J. Rudolph, *A Jew to the Jews: Contours of Pauline Flexibility in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011) and Mark D. Nanos, “Paul’s Relationship to Torah in Light of His Strategy ‘to Become Everything to Everyone’ (1 Corinthians 9:19–23),” in *New Perspectives on Paul and the Jews*, ed. Reimund Bieringer and Didier Pollefeyt (Leuven: Peeters, forthcoming) (here, I reference page numbers from the online version (rev. 9-4-09): <http://www.marknanos.com/1Cor9-Leuven-9-4-09.pdf>). Rudolph argues that 1 Cor. 9:19-23 ‘reflects Paul’s ethic of imitating Christ’s accommodation and open table-fellowship’ (173); This ethic is given clear voice at 1 Cor. 11:1, which continues the thought of 10:32-33, which itself is a restatement of 9:19-23 (174-176). Taking a slightly different approach, Nanos argues that ‘Paul’s self-description...refers entirely to his evangelistic tactic of rhetorical adaptability and did not include any level of lifestyle adaptability involving the adopting of conduct representing his various audiences’ convictional propositions’ (17-18). That is, Paul became like a Jew to the Jews *rhetorically*, presenting his arguments in such a way that would relate to and be best understood by Jews (22), and adapted his rhetorical stylings for ‘those without the law’ in order to be most effective when preaching to that group. He notes ‘that instead of “behaving like” according to the model of lifestyle adaptability, this language signifies how Paul reasons like and relates his convictions like, how he engages like’ the members of his audience, according to their own particular world views (25). Both of these works represent interesting and, to my knowledge, novel approaches to this particular passage in the Pauline corpus, and both raise very valid points regarding the traditional interpretation of 1 Cor. 9:19-23. However, I am not convinced that Paul’s statement here primarily refers to his practice of rhetorical adaptability, or primarily to accommodation and open table-fellowship. While these no doubt play a part in Paul’s statements, I find it difficult to believe that Paul did not adapt certain aspects of his behaviour in his mission to bring Gentiles into the Christ-following fold. For example, if Paul were to attend a Jewish synagogue and a Greco-Roman temple

times with rods (by Gentiles);⁵²² stoned once; in danger from robbers, his own people, Gentiles and false brethren. However, exactly *what* Paul suffered is less important for our purposes than the fact that he did suffer, and that here he directly points to that suffering to demonstrate his own legitimacy as a ‘servant of Christ,’ one who is better than those who speak against him. Harris expresses surprise at this, because Paul does not appeal ‘to his success in founding congregations in strategically important centres around the Aegean, or by referring to the number of converts won, or by citing miracles performed. Rather, appeal is made to evidence of his shame and dishonour.’⁵²³ Paul returns to emphasise this point at 2 Cor. 12:10, again stating that ‘for the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong.’ But it is not only ‘for the sake of Christ,’ as repeatedly stated, that Paul endures, even embraces such hardships as we have seen. Within the Corinthian correspondence, Paul repeatedly attempts to address division among the Christ-following community, reminding the congregation that they are part of a larger body of believers, and that their behaviour should reflect this special status; see above for further discussion of this point. By here referring to the hardships which he endured for Christ, Paul yet again appeals to the Christ-following identity of the Corinthian congregation in order to put aside their divisions and live as members of a unified body. Additionally, in Paul’s opinion, these sufferings could be used ‘as occasions to know and prove the resurrection power of Christ,’⁵²⁴ because the ‘central

with the intent of winning those in attendance to Christ, he would unquestionably have had to adopt certain behaviours which were unique to each situation in order to effectively preach his gospel.

522. In contrast to ‘the Jews’ of the previous clause. For more on this, see Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 191.

523. Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 798.

524. Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 866–67; F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 249.

element of this weakness for Paul is that it is exhibited in the suffering endured as a result of his faithfulness to the gospel.⁵²⁵ He states this in Philippians 1:12: ‘what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.’⁵²⁶ Through his imprisonment, Paul was able to spread the word of Christ to ‘the whole praetorian guard⁵²⁷ and to all the rest,’ and ‘most of the brethren have been made confident in the Lord’ because of his imprisonment. This thought is reiterated in 1:20, ‘...Christ will be honoured in my body, whether by life or by death;’ regardless of what happens in Paul’s life or what causes his death, so long as it is for Christ, both Christ and the Gospel will be benefited.⁵²⁸

This belief appears in several other places in Paul’s letters, as in Philippians 3:17, 1 Corinthians 4:16 and Galatians 4:12. In each of these, Paul urges his followers to become like him, to follow his example. These passages, however, merely emphasise Paul’s desire for imitation. They do not stress that the Christians should imitate him in suffering, though this is expressed quite clearly in other places. 1 Thessalonians 1:6 sees Paul praising the Thessalonian Christians for ‘becoming imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction.’⁵²⁹ He repeats this praise at 2:14, noting

525. A. J. Goddard and S. A. Cummins, “Ill or Ill-Treated? Conflict and Persecution as the Context of Paul’s Original Ministry in Galatia (Galatians 4.12–20),” *JSNT* 52 (1993): 101–02.

526. Though Hawthorne and Martin observe that ‘the apostle is silent about what exactly it was that had happened to him (Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 43), it seems most likely that ‘what had happened’ is the imprisonment mentioned by Paul in Phil. 1:7.

527. Or perhaps, ‘the whole praetorium,’ a governmental and military headquarters. The Greek is ambiguous. For more on this, see the commentaries cited throughout this paper, particularly Osiek, *Philippians Philemon*, 39.

528. Thurston and Ryan, *Philippians and Philemon*, 63; Osiek, *Philippians Philemon*, 42; Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 51–54.

529. Goddard and Cummins cite these three verses, as well as 1 Thessalonians 1:6, as examples of Paul exhorting ‘his churches to imitate him in his faithful suffering.’ However, only 1 Thess. 1:6 explicitly states that they should imitate him in his suffering. Goddard and Cummins, “Ill or Ill-Treated,” 99–100.

that the Thessalonian Christians ‘suffered the same things from your own countrymen’ as the Christians in Judea had suffered at the hands of ‘the Jews.’⁵³⁰ This theme is developed further in 1 Thess., and eventually we find Paul suggesting that Christians *should* endure sufferings as he has: ‘and we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s servant in the gospel of Christ, to establish you in your faith and to exhort you, that no one be moved by these afflictions. You yourselves know that this is to be our lot’ (1 Thess. 3:2-3). Commentaries on 1 Thess. tend to focus on Paul’s description of ‘the Jews’ at this point, but I would like to draw attention to Paul’s statement that this suffering ‘is to be our lot.’ In Paul’s opinion, to be Christian is to endure persecution; that is, a mark of Christian identity is the willing endurance of persecution for Christ. This thought is developed further in later letters in a more theological way. Not only is to be Christian to endure persecution, but in order to achieve the fulfilment of the Christian faith, one *must* endure persecutions. At 2 Corinthians 1:6, Paul returns to this thought, reminding the congregation that they will find ‘comfort and salvation’ when they ‘patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer.’ It is only through this suffering, which, like Paul’s, is ‘for the sake of Christ,’ that the Christians were able to experience ‘a part of ‘Christ’s sufferings’.’⁵³¹ A similar statement is made in Philippians 1:29: ‘For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.’ Here, belief and suffering are both presented as ‘good gifts,’ as ‘two aspects of the same thing (i.e., life in Christ).’⁵³² To be a Christian, and to receive the fulfilment of Christ, one must not only believe, but must suffer for that belief.

530. See n.274.

531. 2 Cor. 1:7 reiterates this. Cf. Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 19, 20 and Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 146.

532. Thurston and Ryan, *Philippians and Philemon*, 70.

We now return to the question at hand, that is, how does this approach to persecution contribute to the identification of the Christian community as something related to but not quite part of the Jewish? To address this, we must turn to a brief examination of Jewish responses to persecution. Fortunately, there is ample evidence from antiquity to demonstrate the unique qualities of the “Christian as sufferer” motif in the first century.

When speaking of persecution in terms of the history of Israel, most scholars point to the book of Daniel to provide the earliest examples,⁵³³ these being the three young men in the fiery furnace of Daniel 3, and Daniel himself in the lion’s den of Daniel 6.⁵³⁴ In both instances, the protagonists are sentenced to death for their refusal to give up some aspect of their religious beliefs, ‘ready to die a gruesome death rather than disobey God,’⁵³⁵ this willingness to die to uphold the commands of God ensured that the three young men and Daniel himself would be cited as paragons of Judaism in other Jewish texts (1-4 Maccabees) and early Christian texts (1 Clement). The four Maccabean books actually provide the best examples of Jewish reactions to persecution in the last two centuries BCE. Faced with Antiochus IV Epiphanes’ attempted desecration of the

533. Pobee suggests that these persecutions began following the Babylonian conquest; Pobee, *Persecution and Martyrdom*, 13. However, I do not consider this to be ‘persecution’ as laid out earlier; the Israelites were largely allowed to continue their religious traditions even after the conquest, and the conquest itself was not motivated by religious intolerance, but by an attitude of aggressive expansion.

534. Cf. Marinus de Jonge, “Jesus’ Death for Others and the Death of the Maccabean Martyrs,” in *Text and Testimony: Essays on New Testament and Apocryphal Literature in Honour of A. F. J. Klijn*. (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1988), 143–44 and Baslez, “Origin of the Martyrdom Images,” 115. Brettler highlights several examples from earlier or contemporary texts, but concludes that ‘[t]here was no concept of martyrdom for most of the biblical period. ... It is only in Daniel...where we find...the first descriptions of martyrdom as a religious ideal in Judaism.’ March Brettler, “Is There Martyrdom in the Hebrew Bible?” in *Sacrificing the Self: Perspectives on Martyrdom in Religion*, ed. Margaret Cormack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 16.

535. de Jonge, “Jesus’ Death for Others,” 143–44; cf. Baslez, “Origin of the Martyrdom Images,” 115.

Jerusalem Temple, the faithful took up arms. In these texts, we find several episodes in which Jews suffered and died for their faith, and the language used is very similar to that found in Paul's writings, primarily from 2 Maccabees, but with examples from each of the four books.⁵³⁶ While in Paul, suffering 'for the sake of Christ' is to be endured and expected by Christians, Jewish suffering is 'for the sake' of something else. Eleazar, in one account, refuses to violate the dietary laws, and is instead said to be willing to die 'for the revered and holy laws' (2 Macc. 6:28);⁵³⁷ seven brothers, and finally their mother, are equally willing to 'give up body and life for the laws of our fathers' in also refusing to violate dietary law (2 Macc. 7:1-42). The reasoning of these martyrs (a willingness to die 'for the law') is comparable to that found in the speeches of 1 Macc. 2:50, 2 Macc. 8:21, and 3 Macc. 1:23, wherein people are urged to give their lives variously 'for the covenant of our fathers,' 'for the ancestral law' and 'for their laws and their country.' This language appears yet again at places in 4 Macc., where the martyrs are said to have died 'for the law' (6:27, 13:9), and even 'for the sake of their religion' (9:6; 18:3).⁵³⁸ These are but a handful of the examples one could cite in identifying Maccabean passages about persecution, but they paint a fair picture of a common theme: in every instance, the martyrs are suffering and dying 'for the law,' that is, the law of Moses. The belief that one should suffer and die rather than violate the laws of God continued into the first century, as well. Josephus writes repeatedly about the 'instinct within every Jew from the day of his birth, to regard [the Scriptures, or the Law] as the

536. There are also references to martyrs within Judaism in: Enoch 91-104; Ecclesiasticus 2; Wisdom of Solomon 2:10-21; Psalms of Solomon; 1QS 8.4; 1QH 2.12ff.; 1QpHab 7; and *The Assumption of Moses*. Pobee offers a brief discussion of these sources; Pobee, *Persecution and Martyrdom*, 17.

537. In 1 Maccabees 6:18-31, Eleazar is presented as a warrior, killed in battle against the Greeks. In both cases, however, his struggle and death, are for the law.

538. The Greek is εὐσεβεία, piety, or reverence towards the gods, in this case, the one God of Israel.

decrees of God, to abide by them and, if need be, cheerfully die for them' (*Ap.* 1.42; cf. *Bell.* 2.196, 197, 198; 3.360). It is important to note that Josephus says that Jews are ready to die for the law 'if need be,' suggesting that this is not a requirement, not something that must be done, or even be expected in order fully to be a member of this group. A similar sentiment can be found in 1 Macc. 2:40-41. When faced with the prospect of being slaughtered if attacked on the Sabbath, the Jewish rebels determine that they may take up arms to defend themselves on the Sabbath, in violation of the law, rather than to die for it. Clearly, suffering death is but one way to demonstrate one's adherence to and zeal for the law, but 'one should not be too eager for death to show one's zeal for the Lord.'⁵³⁹ In this vein, we find that Philo also addresses persecution. And though he does not speak of it in violent terms, as do Josephus and the Maccabean authors, he is very much within the tradition of defending the law. In fact, his *Legatio ad Gaium* details a delegation of Alexandrian Jews which he lead to Rome, to appeal to the emperor, Gaius Caligula. The purpose of this delegation was to appeal for imperial protection of Jewish rights, something the Jews had enjoyed for many years under Rome, but which were being threatened in Alexandria. Even when it was not a martial struggle, Philo and others were not willing to sit idly by during persecution of some kind. Instead, they acted, in defence of their way of life.

As noted above, Paul does not shy away from his persecutory acts against the Christian group prior to his conversion; rather, he uses this as an example of his 'zeal' for Judaism. Many scholars have noted that this pre-conversion persecution of the Christian community is not, strictly speaking, a persecution at all. Rather, Paul seems to be acting as a persecutor because 'he looked upon the [Christian] church as close enough

539. Pobee, *Persecution and Martyrdom*, 93.

to Judaism, if not under it (as a sub-community), to cause concern for the latter.⁵⁴⁰ Whatever his views as a Jew persecuting the Christians, Paul post-conversion sees the matter rather differently. Hultgren argues that Paul now sees the Jewish and nascent Christ-following groups at this time ‘as actually split into two recognisable communities,’ the latter of which was ‘no longer subject to the parent body.’⁵⁴¹ Elsewhere in his letter, Paul further identifies the Christian body as something related to but not wholly part of the Jewish or Greco-Roman identity groups by citing ongoing persecutions toward the Christians from both groups.

In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul refers to several specific types of persecution which he has endured. Two of these, the ‘forty lashes less one’ received five times ‘at the hands of the Jews’ and the three occasions on which he was ‘beaten with rods,’ point to specific agents perpetrating these acts. In the first instance, this is obvious; Paul himself identifies ‘the Jews’ as those administering the ‘forty lashes less one,’ which is itself a punishment proscribed at Deuteronomy 25:1-3.⁵⁴² And while no agent is identified by Paul in connection with his being ‘beaten with rods,’ this style of punishment is Roman in origin, proscribed in the *Lex Julia*.⁵⁴³ This identification of persecution from two communities is also present at 1 Thessalonians 2:14, with all due caution regarding the authenticity of this section.⁵⁴⁴ Paul praises the Thessalonian Christians for becoming imitators of the Christian churches in Judea, because the Thessalonian believers

540. Hultgren, “Paul’s Pre-Christian Persecutions,” 101. Cf. Kruse, “The Price Paid,” 265 and E.P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 192.

541. Hultgren, “Paul’s Pre-Christian Persecutions,” 101–02.

542. See note 519.

543. Cf. Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 191. Acts 16 further describes Paul being subjected to corporal punishment by Roman authorities.

544. See note 273.

‘suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews.’ Here again, Paul specifically identifies the Jews as agents of persecution against Jewish Christians in Judea, and implies a Gentile source for the persecutions taking place against the Christians in Thessalonica.⁵⁴⁵ This would imply that the objects of this persecutory activity, the Christians, were in some way identifiably different.

Finally, there is much overlap between the way Jewish texts, such as the four Books of Maccabees, and Paul address the issue of persecution; both Paul and the authors of the Maccabean books hold that suffering and dying ‘for the sake of’ either Christ or the law is a good thing, and that doing such will lead to divine rewards. However, in the Jewish world, this action is only to be taken in defence of the law, to avoid violating the law. Obviously, if there is any way to avoid it, suffering and death should not be sought out. In the Christian view of Paul, however, this is not the case; to be a Christian is to be persecuted, to suffer and possibly die (as he himself would after finally reaching Rome). Christians were not to shy away from such an event, because suffering and death would only further Christ and the Gospel, and help to fulfil their duty as Christians. For Paul, then, suffering persecution for the sake of Christ became a marker of Christ-following identity, and thus part of the unique cultural elements which served to identify members of the group.

We need only offer a brief statement regarding the implications of these cultural features in terms of Social Identity Theory, which focuses on the ways in which group members identify themselves and apply positive or negative connotations to holding membership in the group. In terms of the Christ-following communities, these cultural features provide members a way in which to mark themselves and others as part of the

545. ‘With fellow-countrymen Paul refers primarily to the Gentile fellow-citizens of the Thessalonians, but Jews may also be included....’ Best, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 114.

community, to identify one another through participation in these cultural events. Further, by limiting these events only to members of the Christ-following community, a sense of value is added to them; if only the chosen are able to receive baptism and participate in the eucharist, then being allowed to do so is of worth to community members.

Ekklesial Homeland

Perhaps the most difficult of the group identity criteria to demonstrate for the first century Christ-following movement is that of a homeland. As noted in the introduction to this study, and at the outset of this chapter, this is not necessarily the physical occupation of a homeland by the group in question, but a sense of having and belonging to a homeland regardless of where one actually lived. A prime example of this is the Jewish identity group following the various conquests of their homeland. After these, large communities of Jews settled in scattered locations throughout the Mediterranean, and yet still maintained a link to their homeland through their religious traditions, part of which involved the Temple in Jerusalem and God's promise of the Holy Land. However, as discussed previously, this sense of connection to the Temple and the Holy Land were not present in Paul's thinking; for him, the Christ-following body as a whole was the 'temple of God' (see Chapter 3). This fact, coupled with the widespread nature of the Christ-following *ekklesiai* to whom Paul writes, makes it nearly impossible to describe any particular land or nation as being the homeland of the nascent Christian movement. As W.D. Davies notes, 'Pauline ecclesiology is a-territorial,'⁵⁴⁶

546. W.D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 182. Davies' study of the role of the land in Paul's thinking ultimately concludes that "'In Christ" Paul was free from the Law and, therefore, from the land,' and that 'his geographical identity was subordinated to that of being "in Christ"....' 220. For his examination, see especially 164-220.

that is, unconnected to a specific geographic region. But Paul does make mention of a place where Christ-followers have citizenship, presenting the *πολίτευμα* which is *ἐν οὐρανοῖς* as a homeland for the Christ-followers.

This phrase occurs only one time in Paul's writings, at Philippians 3:20: *ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει*, generally translated 'For our commonwealth is in heaven.' The key term here, *πολίτευμα*, requires closer consideration, however. It derives from the Greek *πολιτεία*, defined in the LSJ primarily as 'condition and rights of a citizen, citizenship,' which in turn stems from *πολίς*, 'city.' The sense is changed slightly in *πολίτευμα*, which is primarily defined as 'the business of government' or 'act of administration,' that is, the *πολίτευμα* holds *πολιτεία* within the *πολίς*, and acts as a body that has some governmental control within an organisation. This need not necessarily be the government of the city itself. Gert Lüderitz observes that '[t]he term can either represent a political body which is part of the administrative organisation of a Greek polis, or it can stand for other organised groups of people.'⁵⁴⁷ As examples, he points out that 'festival associations of women, a cult society, a club of soldiers, associations of citizens from the same city living abroad, and ethnic communities' can all be applied the term *πολίτευμα*,⁵⁴⁸ and he offers a wealth of inscriptional evidence demonstrating the use of the term by ethnic communities 'from the third or second century BC up to the second century AD.'⁵⁴⁹ This use is of particular interest for our examination, suggesting that *πολίτευμα* played a role in distinguishing groups prior to and after Paul did so with the *ekklesia*. Bockmuehl further points out that the term was 'often used of the *Jewish* community, in some cases with specific reference to its

547. Gert Lüderitz, "What is the Politeuma?" in *Studies in Early Jewish Epigraphy*, ed. Jan Willem van Henten and Pieter Willem van der Horst (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 185.

548. Lüderitz, "Politeuma," 189; cf. Bockmuehl, "1 Thess. 2:14–16," 233.

549. Lüderitz, "Politeuma," 196–202.

internal forms of self-government.⁵⁵⁰ The concept of a self-governing, identifiable group can be seen in the Christ-following *ekklesia*, as well, particularly given Paul's instruction to the Corinthians to settle disputes within the community, rather than seeking the aid of the courts (1 Cor. 6:1-4).⁵⁵¹

However, this is not the only sense in which *πολίτευμα* is used. The LSJ goes on to offer a definition of 'citizen rights, citizenship,' and cites Phil. 3:20 as a metaphorical example of this usage. Bauer, meanwhile, offers a primary definition of 'commonwealth' or 'state' for the use of the term at Phil. 3:20.⁵⁵² This definition is also offered by Strathman,⁵⁵³ Hutter,⁵⁵⁴ and Hawthorne and Martin.⁵⁵⁵ It is the view of this study that the true sense of *πολίτευμα* at Phil. 3:20 lies somewhere between these two senses, that of 'citizenship' and 'commonwealth';⁵⁵⁶ certainly, the former is implied in the latter, and given the sense of governing often associated with the term, it is reasonable to assume that members of a *πολίτευμα* would hold citizenship in the city, nation, or organisation which they oversaw.

550. Bockmuehl, "1 Thess. 2:14–16," 233; cf. Fuchs, *Juden Ägyptens*, 89; Klijn, *Introduction*, 110; Stegner, *DPL*, 211-13; John M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*.

551. It must be noted that similar ideas appear in both Jewish and Greco-Roman authors. Philo states that those who believe in God and the Torah are native citizens of a promised land in heaven (cf. *Conf.* 78; *Gig.* 61), and Heraclitus wrote of his belief after death he would become a citizen of heaven (Letter to Aphidamas 5); cf. Bockmuehl, "1 Thess. 2:14–16," 233–34 and Strathmann, *TDNT*, vol. 6, 538.

552. The Vulgate translation renders *πολίτευμα* as *conversatio*, which is defined in the Lewis and Short as 'frequent place of abode,' which does not suggest a sense of governing or citizenship, but does imply a semi-permanent home.

553. Strathmann, *TDNT*, vol. 6, 535.

554. *EDNT*, vol. 3, 130.

555. Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 231.

556. Bockmuehl, "1 Thess. 2:14–16," 233 also suggests that *πολίτευμα* 'combines the primary sense of a political entity ('state') as a whole with that of the active participation of the individuals who belong to it.

The context of the sole NT occurrence lends some insight into Paul's ultimate meaning. Prior to the statement in question, Paul criticises those whom he characterises as 'enemies of the cross of Christ' (3:18), noting that they will end in 'destruction' because οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες, 'they are thinking of earthly things' (3:19). These 'earthly things' directly contrast with that which is ἐν οὐρανοῖς, in heaven, in 3:20, the πολίτευμα, state or citizenship. It is important to note that Paul is not contrasting the heavenly homeland of the *ekklesia* with any particular city or nation. He makes no such specifications anywhere in the Philippians epistle. However, Paul is unquestionably presenting a concept which 'circumscribes a Graeco-Roman notion of the state that certainly includes the civic rights, duties and responsibilities of its citizens'⁵⁵⁷ by referring to an *ekklesial* πολίτευμα which exists not on earth, but in heaven. His main concern then is not to remove the *ekklesia* entirely from within the Roman Empire. Indeed, 'citizenship in Rome and citizenship in heaven would not be mutually exclusive,' though 'the latter in many circumstances could become subversive of the former.'⁵⁵⁸ Paul's primary concern is rather to provide the *ekklesia* with a homeland that is distinct from *all* earthly institutions. Thus, he presents the *ekklesia* as being a colony of the heavenly state present on the earth, which has full citizenship in the heavenly domain.⁵⁵⁹

557. Bockmuehl, "1 Thess. 2:14–16," 233.

558. Charles B. Cousar, *Reading Galatians, Philippians, and 1 Thessalonians* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys Publishing Inc., 2001), 177.

559. Cf. Hutter, Strathman, PHEME Perkins, "Philippians: Theology for the Heavenly Politeuma," in *Pauline Theology, Volume I: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon*, Jouette M. Bassler (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 102, Wendy Cotter, "Our *Politeuma* is in Heaven: The Meaning of Philippians 3.17–21," in *Origins and Method: Towards a New Understanding of Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Bradley H. McLean (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 104, and Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 231. However, it is worth noting that an understanding of πολίτευμα meaning 'citizenship,' in part or in full, does present an interesting contrast to the Roman Empire, for whom citizenship was a key feature. Full citizenship within the Empire granted many rights and privileges which were unavailable to non-citizens, and sometimes even to freedmen. Philippi was itself a Roman colony with 'full Italian legal

Tied closely to the *πολίτευμα* described at Phil. 3:20 is a related term which appears at 1:27: *πολιτεύομαι*. This verb is generally used to mean ‘to live as a citizen,’ that is, with the full civic rights and duties of a citizen (LSJ), and is used by Paul to encourage the Philippian *ekklesia* to ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε, ‘live as a citizen worthy of the gospel of Christ.’ In modern translations, this passage is often rendered ‘Let your manner of life be worthy,’ drawing on instances where ‘the term is used to describe simply the practice of a Jewish *way of life*,’ which leads some to suggest ‘that the meaning of the word is identical to ‘walk.’⁵⁶⁰ However, others disagree with this simplification, highlighting the political nature of ‘the adoption of a Jewish lifestyle,’ and the clear connection between this verse and 3:20, and hold to a translation which conveys the sense of citizenship.⁵⁶¹

There is one other instance in Paul’s writings that could be taken to refer to a heavenly state of some kind, a homeland for the *ekklesia* that is not of this world; the ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ, Jerusalem above, of Gal. 4:26. As the heavenly state is contrasted with earthly things in Philippians, so is the Jerusalem above contrasted with νῦν Ἱερουσαλήμ, the present Jerusalem (4:25). The implication is clear. The present Jerusalem is one of this earth, with which the *ekklesia* has little attachment, and which is represented in Paul’s metaphorical arguments by Hagar, the slave woman who bore the

status’: Bockmuehl, “1 Thess. 2:14–16,” 97. Acts 21:39 features Paul making a claim to citizenship in the city of Tarsus, while 22:24–29 depicts Paul claiming to be ‘a Roman man,’ that is, a man with Roman citizenship, to receive a trial. Though we have discussed the problematic nature of Acts previously in this study, and it must be noted that Paul never refers to his own Roman citizenship in his letters, the cultural context of the importance of Roman citizenship and Paul’s claim of a higher form of citizenship do suggest the possibility of a direct contrast to the Roman Empire; as Bockmuehl says, Paul is playing ‘on the perceived desirability of citizenship in Roman society at Philippi,’ and contrasting ‘against this the *Christian* vision of enfranchisement and belonging’: Bockmuehl, “1 Thess. 2:14–16,” 98.

560. E.g., Strathmann, *TDNT*, vol. 6, 526, 534.

561. Bockmuehl, “1 Thess. 2:14–16,” 97–98 and Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 68.

child of the flesh. Jerusalem above, however, exists nowhere on this earth, but in the heavenly realm with God, and is represented by Sarah, the free woman who bore the child of promise, Isaac. Unlike the Philippians passage, Gal. 4:26 does not suggest a state or citizenship in a heavenly realm; no such specific language appears in the passage.⁵⁶² But this does lend support to the belief that Paul saw the *ekklesia* as a representation of a heavenly realm on earth, one to which they would return with Christ.⁵⁶³

It should not be surprising that, in Paul, conceptions of a Christ-following homeland focus on a heavenly realm, particularly given that the names for the community in his writings all refer to the holy nature of the community. As noted in Chapter 3, the name of a people group usually derived from the name of their homeland; thus, the Greeks were named for Greece (Ἕλληνες from Ἑλλάς), and the Jews for Judea (Ἰουδαῖοι from Ἰουδαία). Following the cognitive dimension of Social Identity Theory, linking the Christ-following communities to a homeland in heaven speaks to their holy nature on earth, expressed in various forms through names for the community while simultaneously granting to members a holy, chosen status among peoples.

Ekklesial Solidarity

As the previous group identity criterion is the most difficult to demonstrate, so the final criterion, a sense of solidarity amongst the group, is the easiest, and so will

562. Martyn, *Galatians*, 440–41 suggests that the ‘present Jerusalem’ and the ‘Jerusalem above’ refer, respectively, to the Jerusalem church and a heavenly church, rather than to earthly and heavenly realms. The heavenly church of ‘Jerusalem above’ is the true ‘mother of the Galatian churches.’

563. James D.G. Dunn, *Galatians*, 253 and Betz, *Galatians*, 246 both note the Jewish origins of a belief in a ‘heavenly Jerusalem.’ Betz, however, notes that Paul’s view differs from other existing Jewish ideas on this topic, noting that ‘[Paul’s] ‘heavenly Jerusalem’ is pre-existent and remains in heaven; those who are to dwell in it must ascend to it,’ rather than a heavenly Jerusalem which would become earthly at the end of time (cf. 4 Ezra 7:26; 13:36).

receive only a short examination here. This is due in no small part to the fact that each of the previous group identity criteria contribute to this last. Previously, we noted several examples which suggested the importance of the solidarity of the *ekklesia* to Paul. At Gal. 3:28, Paul's statement that 'all are one in Christ Jesus' marks his attempt to identify the community as a united entity, wherever members of that community may be. This can also be observed at 1 Cor. 12:13, which sees Paul identifying all those who were baptised 'by one Spirit' as part of 'one body.' Additionally, Paul's near constant behaviour correcting instructions throughout the Corinthian correspondence are often couched in the framework of 'this is not how we do it in the *ekklesia* of God; you must remember that you are part of something larger' (cf. 1 Cor. 9-11). The sentiment of this thought is echoed at Rom. 15:5, without the vitriol offered to the Corinthians: 'May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus.' Paul also points to other churches as inspirational examples for his congregations, commending the Thessalonians for becoming an inspiration to the Christ-followers of Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess. 1:7), and praising them for imitating the communities in Judea in their suffering (2:14). And there is a constant theme of the *ekklesia* living 'in Christ,' present in nearly all of Paul's letters.

In every instance, the phrase 'in Christ' is intended to point to the prime, overarching common feature of members of the Christ-following identity group; they all are 'in Christ.' In Christ, they are heirs of God and sons of Abraham and will receive the blessing of Abraham (Gal. 3:14); in Christ, they participate in the cultural elements of the community; in Christ, they are a united identity. This can be further observed in Paul's identification of a number of individuals of the Roman congregation as his 'fellow workers' (16:3, 9) 'in Christ,' or as those who were 'in Christ before me' (16:7); of the Corinthian congregation as being 'sanctified in Christ' (1 Cor. 1:2) and possessing

the grace of God given to them ‘in Christ Jesus’ (1 Cor. 1:4); the list could go on and on. In his efforts, then, to demonstrate to both the members of his Christ-following communities and to his opponents that the Christ-followers did indeed have membership in a new identity group, Paul has laid a heavy emphasis on the solidarity that is felt (or, in some cases, expected to be felt) between members of that group.

Summary

Here, then, we have seen evidence of five of the six criteria of group identity, as laid out by Hutchinson and Smith. Throughout his letters, Paul goes to great lengths to construct a fictive kinship for Christ-followers based on their relationship to God and Christ, presenting God as the familial patriarch and Jesus as His Son, who is in turn a brother to the Christ-following believers. In addition to this, Paul strives to impress upon the Christ-followers that they exist in a kinship relationship not only with God, but with one another as well. In particular, the lineage of Abraham has been adopted from Paul’s Jewish tradition, along with the covenantal promise of God to Abraham and his descendants, and redefined in terms of Abrahamic faith, rather than Abrahamic obedience. By redefining Abrahamic descent in this way, Paul is able to include Gentiles in the covenantal inheritance promised to Abraham’s descendants, and to observe that both Jewish and Gentile converts must both enter the new Christ-following community.

Paul also presents several historical figures and events for the fictive kinship group of Christ-followers, which serve to tie community members together. Several of these memories are uniquely Christian in nature, focusing on the death and resurrection of Christ as important events in the history of the Christ-following community, while others, such as the figure of Abraham, are adopted from Jewish tradition into a Christ-following milieu. Whereas Abraham in Judaism is praised for his obedience, Paul shifts

this focus to Abraham's faith which earned him the covenant in the first place, the same faith possessed by members of the new Christ-following community.

A series of cultural features which are unique to the new Christ-following group provide a further means by which to not only demonstrate ones membership in this group, but to also identify and acknowledge the membership of others. Some of these cultural features involve communal gatherings and greetings, such as the eucharist and the holy kiss, while others allow members to identify themselves as being members of this group, such as baptism and the willing endurance of persecution. And while many of these features bear much in common with, and indeed may even be drawn from the cultural practices of other groups, Paul's presentation of them as reflective of the glory of Christ, as participatory in the suffering, death, resurrection and ministry of Christ grant these cultural features a uniquely Christ-following nature.

Perhaps the most difficult of the evident criteria to demonstrate is that of a Christ-following homeland; this is often held as being one of the more important elements of group identity. Yet one may find evidence of such a homeland in Paul's appeal to a heavenly *πολίτευμα* in which the Christ-followers have an inheritance. This homeland allows Paul to appeal for proper behaviour amongst the Christ-followers, and further encourages inter-group harmony, an issue evident in several of the Pauline epistles. This inter-group harmony, in fact, stands as the sixth criterion of group identity, and as seen, throughout Paul's letters the apostle makes the case that all of the Christ-followers are part of 'one body,' and should behave as such.

The sole outlying criterion, and one which cannot be demonstrated in Paul's writings, is a proper name for the community. As members of the Jewish identity group could call themselves 'Jews' or 'Israelites,' and members of the Roman group could identify themselves as 'Romans,' there is no such uniform nomenclature in Paul's

writings to identify the Christ-followers as one group. Rather, there are a series of terms used by Paul throughout the letters, each referring to the holy, chosen nature of the Christ-followers. However, despite the lack of a proper name for the community, Paul's use of these terms to refer to the Christ-following individuals and communities does indicate that, in his thinking, they represented an identifiable entity, which existed throughout the Mediterranean. Thus, despite the lack of a proper name, Paul viewed the Christ-followers as an identifiable group.

CONCLUSION

It cannot be denied that the Christian movement emerged from Judaism within a Greco-Roman world and spread throughout the Mediterranean in the first century CE, and yet the earliest sources available to us that speak of the Christians as a distinct, 'ethnic' community do not emerge until a century after this. The second century is widely accepted as the earliest point at which the Christians can be said to be distinct from their Jewish brethren. However, as seen, there is evidence that the Christ-followers did exist as an identifiable community in the middle of the first century CE, under the Roman Emperor Nero. As this study draws to a conclusion, I would like to return to the question posed in the introduction: what lead to the eventual 'ethnic' distinction of the Christians which can be seen in several second century texts? Or, to put it another way, what are the origins of the Christian 'ethnic' group which is described in the second century?

In the preceding study, we have employed certain indicators of group identity, through the list of group identity criteria provided by Hutchinson and Smith in their work on modern ethnicity:

'1) a common *proper name*, to identify and express the 'essence' of the community; 2) a myth of *common ancestry*...that includes the idea of a common origin in time and place and...gives...a sense of fictive kinship; 3) shared *historical memories*, or...shared memories of a common past...including heroes, events, and their commemoration; 4) one or more *elements of a common culture*, which need not be specified but normally include religion, customs, or language; 5) a *link* with a *homeland*, not necessarily its physical occupation...only its symbolic attachment...as with Diaspora peoples; 6) a *sense of solidarity* on the part of at least some sections of the...population.'⁵⁶⁴

564. Hutchinson and Smith, *Ethnicity*, 6–7.

Through examinations of both ancient Greek and Jewish authors, we demonstrated the applicability of these indicators to the ancient world, and observed ancient efforts to describe those features which differentiated one group from another. In so doing, we were able to identify several key features which marked out the Jewish identity group in the ancient world, particularly in the first century, mostly derived from the religious traditions contained in the Hebrew Bible: a common proper name for the group, variously 'Israelite' or 'Judean,' depending on the source; a sense of fictive kinship amongst members, primarily tied to their belief in descent from Abraham and his offspring and membership in one of the Twelve Tribes named for Abraham's great-grandsons; shared historical memories, including figures and events, such as Noah and the Flood, Moses, Passover, the giving of the Law and, in the first century CE, the events of the Maccabean period; common cultural elements, such as the circumcision of newborn males, strict dietary laws and Sabbath observance, as well as a religious tradition centred in the Second Temple; a link with a homeland, in this case the Promised Land of Hebrew Scripture, known variously as Israel, Judea and Palestine, a feature for which even for those members of the Jewish identity group living outside of the land felt a connection; and a sense of solidarity amongst group members, an unquestionable feature of Jewish identity in the first century CE.

However, identity in the ancient world is not so simple as it might at first appear, and it was not uncommon for an individual to be a member of more than one identity group at a time. For example, it was possible for a Jew to hold Roman citizenship, and thus belong to both the Jewish and Roman identity groups simultaneously. An examination of first century Jewish groups revealed the prevalence of multiple identities even within the so-called Jewish 'sects' of the period. Given the tendency to identify the Christ-followers of the first century as a Jewish sub-group, an examination of these

‘sects’ revealed key features which served to identify them as not only members of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes, but also, despite their sectarian differences, as Jews.

In this process, we highlighted scholarship regarding key identifying features of first century Jews by James D.G. Dunn and E.P. Sanders. Sanders argues that there is a ‘pattern of common Judaism’ in the first century, a series of beliefs and practices which served to indicate membership in the Jewish identity group, features which, as the name suggests, were common to all members.⁵⁶⁵ Dunn’s treatment of this topic resulted in what he termed the ‘four pillars of Judaism,’ these being monotheism; a sense of election, a belief in covenant focused in Torah, and a sense of the land focused in the Temple. As with Sanders, Dunn observed that these four features were common to all adherents of Judaism, that is, all members of the Jewish identity group, in the first century CE.⁵⁶⁶

The presence of these key features, as well as the criteria of group identity derived from the list of Hutchinson and Smith, were observed in each of the Jewish sects which existed in the first century CE, but when examining the Pauline epistles for evidence of these features, there was some disparity. While Paul himself still demonstrated some features of the Jewish identity group, the letters he wrote to various Christ-following communities demonstrated a distinct lack of adherence to those key features identified by Sanders and Dunn as being present in members of the Jewish identity group. This suggested a unique nature to the Christ-following communities of the mid-first century CE, and allowed for the possibility that they may have exhibited features which served to identify them as a group.

565. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 422 and Sanders, *Judaism*, 262–78.

566. James D.G. Dunn, *Partings of the Ways*, 19–35.

Following this thought, we turned directly to the undisputed Pauline epistles in search of group identity features which were unique to the Christ-following communities. Several of these features, such as a fictive kinship relationship built in part around Abrahamic descent and succession and shared meals, were clearly derived from Jewish tradition, though presented as being focused in Christ for the new community. Other features, such as the shared memories of the death and resurrection of Christ, are uniquely Christian in nature. In fact, five of the six criteria of group identity were demonstrated as existing within Paul's letters, while one, a common proper name for the community, was absent. Despite this, Paul's identification of the Christ-following individuals and communities through various terms did indicate his view that the Pauline Christ-followers were an identifiable entity in the first century CE.

Here, then, is the answer to our question. While a complete separation from Judaism did not occur until, at the earliest, the second century CE, we find evidence that in the middle of the first century the Christ-following communities displayed unique identifying features. These features served a number of functions in the first century. In some instances, as with the Paul's construction of a fictive kinship relationship between Christ-followers and each other and between Christ-followers and Christ, these features served to replace key societal components which may have been lost by converts, in this case the societal component of a family group. In other instances, such as the cultural practices of the eucharist and the holy kiss, these features allowed members both to identify each other as Christ-followers and to strengthen the ties between one another, contributing to an overall sense of solidarity amongst the community. But one key function which each of these identifying features served was in allowing the Pauline Christ-following communities of the first century to be identified as 'something else.' These features laid the foundation for later authors to write of an 'ethnic' Christian

group by giving the various groups of the first century the tools by which to identify Christ-followers as not-Jews and not-Greeks. It is even possible that, when seeking to attach blame for the fire of 64 CE, these features allowed Nero to single out members of the Christ-following movement as the culprits. While these features, as presented in the Pauline epistles, by no means reveal a community, or even the idea of a community, which is completely removed or independent from the Jewish parent body, or in many ways from the overarching Greco-Roman society dominant in the Mediterranean, they do reveal that Paul saw certain aspects of his Christ-following communities as being unique in the world, as displaying unique characteristics and possessing unique traits which made them an identifiable ‘something else.’

Over the next fifty years, these identifying features evolved in many ways into distinct boundary markers, similar to those which existed around other groups in the Mediterranean. Foremost among these evolving markers is, perhaps, the development or adoption of the proper name ‘Christian,’ which is used by the early second century (perhaps even the late first century) by both insiders (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16; *Diog.* 1.1; *Aristides Apology* 2.2, *Tertullian Ad Nationes* 8.1) and outsiders (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44; Suetonius, *Nero* 16; Pliny, *Natural History* V.XV.73) to identify the community and its members. We may also observe the evolution of the third feature of group identity, shared historical memories. Between the time of Paul’s writing and the early second century, the Christian group identity experienced half a century’s worth of events (e.g., the Neronian persecutions) and figures (e.g., first century martyrs) which became part of their unique historical group identity. In the previous chapter, we saw how one element of Christ-following culture, the holy kiss, evolved over time (restrictions were placed on who could exchange this kiss and how), and one may assume that other cultural features experienced a similar evolution. For example, on the

journey to his trial and martyrdom in Rome, Ignatius writes to the Christians of Rome assuring them ‘that I die willingly for God, if only you do not hinder,’ (*Rom.* 4.1) suggesting that the endurance of persecution and death has taken on a greater value for the Christians of the early second century. And it is not beyond possibility that the Paul himself became a figure of cultural and historical importance for the church; Ignatius identifies ‘Peter and Paul’ as apostles (*Rom.* 4.3), implying an elevated status for both figures at the time of writing. Further, one may note the continued presence of a sense of fictive kinship and group solidarity between community members which, if anything, became even more pronounced as the Christ-following movement of the first century spread throughout the Mediterranean, eventually becoming the Christian ‘ethnic’ group described in late first and early second century writings. As the identity markers observed in the writings of Paul evolved, they became ‘ethnic’ markers, allowing witnesses to identify the Christians as a distinct ‘ethnic’ entity.⁵⁶⁷

It is hoped that this examination will provide further understanding into the ways in which the early Christians sought to identify and later distinguish themselves as Christians. Paul’s efforts to create unique identifying features for the Christ-followers of the first century laid the ground work for the eventual ‘ethnic’ distinction of the Christians of the second, third and fourth centuries.

567. A recent study on the ‘ethnic’ nature of the Christian community, which focuses almost exclusively on sources from the second century and beyond, is Buell, *Why This New Race?*.

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